



John Hilinski M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

GUIDELINES

COSMETIC EAR SURGERY

PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

Cosmetic ear surgery is performed to improve the shape, position, or proportion of the ears. This may include repositioning prominent ears (otoplasty), reducing ear size (macrotia reduction), or reshaping the earlobes. The procedure typically involves reshaping the cartilage and securing it in a more favorable position. Healing occurs over several weeks.

PROCEDURE-SPECIFIC PREOPERATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoid any trauma or irritation to the ears prior to surgery.
- If you have any skin irritation, infection, or piercing-related issues involving the ears, notify our office prior to surgery.
- All earrings and piercings must be removed prior to surgery.

SUPPLIES

Please obtain the following supplies prior to your surgical date:

- Q-tips
- Hydrogen peroxide (3%)
- A mild antibacterial soap such as Dial
- Vaseline or Aquaphor ointment
- A soft, supportive headband (athletic-style)

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

- At the completion of surgery, a bulky dressing will be placed around your head to protect the ears and maintain their new position. Leave this dressing in place and do not remove or disturb it.
- Mild to moderate swelling, bruising, and discomfort are expected.
- A feeling of tightness or pressure around the ears is normal.
- Small amounts of drainage or spotting on the dressing may occur during the first 24–48 hours.

DRESSINGS AND HEADBAND

- The initial bulky dressing is typically removed within 1–3 days after surgery.
- Once the dressing is removed, you will begin wearing a headband to support the ears.
- The headband should be worn continuously (day and night) for the first 1–2 weeks.
- After this, the headband should be worn at night only for an additional 4–6 weeks.
- The headband should fit snugly but should not be excessively tight.



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INCISION CARE

- While the initial dressing is in place, no incision care should be performed.
- Incisions are typically located behind the ears and occasionally within natural creases.
- Begin cleaning the incision sites after the dressing has been removed and you have been instructed to do so.

THE CLEANING PROCESS

Cleaning should be performed three times per day to remove any dried blood or debris and maintain a clean healing environment. Only one cleaning (typically the morning) should involve diluted hydrogen peroxide.

Morning

- Use a diluted hydrogen peroxide solution (mixed 1:1 with water) to gently clean along the incision lines. Do not use full-strength peroxide.
- Use a light rolling motion and limit this step to removing visible debris.
- Dry the area with a clean Q-tip or gauze, then apply a thin layer of ointment as directed.

Afternoon and Evening

- Use a mild antibacterial soap mixed with water to gently clean the area. Dry with a clean Q-tip or gauze and apply a thin layer of ointment. Repeat in the evening.

SHOWERING

- Showering from the shoulders down is permitted 48 hours after surgery, provided the dressing remains dry.
- Once the dressing has been removed, you may allow water and mild soap to run gently over the ears. Do not scrub or apply pressure. Pat dry carefully and reapply ointment.

SLEEPING

- Sleep with your head elevated so that it remains above the level of your heart for the first several days after surgery.
- Avoid sleeping on your side or placing pressure on the ears.
- Continue to avoid direct pressure on the ears for at least 4–6 weeks.
- A travel pillow may help prevent rolling onto the ears during sleep.

ACTIVITY

- Avoid strenuous activity, bending, heavy lifting, and any activity that raises your heart rate or blood pressure for at least 3–4 weeks.



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- Light walking is encouraged early in recovery.
- Avoid any activity that may result in trauma to the ears.

SWELLING AND BRUISING

- Swelling and bruising are expected and will gradually improve over time.
- It is normal for the ears to appear somewhat overcorrected or closer to the head initially due to swelling.

COLD COMPRESSES

Cold compresses are generally not recommended directly on the ears after surgery, as this may compromise blood flow to the skin.

DIET

- Resume a normal diet as tolerated.
- Maintain good hydration and adequate nutrition to support healing.

MEDICATIONS AFTER SURGERY

- Take prescribed pain medication as directed.
- You may transition to acetaminophen as discomfort improves.
- Avoid all restricted medications until cleared by our office.

AVOIDING TRAUMA

- Avoid any manipulation or pressure on the ears during healing.
- Do not bend, fold, or pull on the ears.
- Be cautious when dressing; use clothing that does not need to be pulled over the head.
- Avoid activities that may result in accidental contact with the ears.

GLASSES AND MASKS

- Avoid wearing glasses or sunglasses that place pressure on the ears for approximately 2–3 weeks.
- If necessary, glasses may be adjusted or supported to minimize pressure.
- Use caution with masks that loop around the ears.

SUN EXPOSURE

- Avoid direct sun exposure to the ears during early healing.
- Use sunscreen and protective measures once incisions have healed.



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HEALING TIMELINE

- Initial healing occurs over the first several weeks.
- Most patients are socially presentable within 1–2 weeks.
- Swelling and contour refinement continue over several months.

FOLLOW-UP

- Your first postoperative visit is typically within 1–3 days after surgery for dressing removal and evaluation.
- Additional follow-up visits will be scheduled as needed.

WHEN TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE

Contact our office if you experience significant swelling on one side, increasing pain, persistent bleeding, fever greater than 101°F, or any concerns regarding healing.