

Meatoplasty surgery

This leaflet explains more about meatoplasty surgery and the benefits, risks and alternatives, and what you can expect when you come to hospital.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is meatoplasty surgery?

This is a procedure to widen the opening of the ear canal. This can be done under local anesthetic or you can be put to sleep under a general anesthetic.

Why should I have meatoplasty surgery?

This surgery is often offered to patients with very narrow ear canals who have problems with the build-up of ear wax or get a lot of outer ear infections. It can also be offered to patients who are undergoing or have had mastoid surgery in the past.

What are the benefits of meatoplasty surgery?

The main aims of the surgery are:

- To increase the size of the ear canal opening
- To help prevent recurrent ear infections
- To help dry up a chronically leaking ear
- To help make ear wax clearance easier.

What are the risks?

The operation is done under a general anaesthetic, and all operations under a general anaesthetic carry a small risk. Your anaesthetist will discuss these with you on the day of surgery.

There are some associated risks with meatoplasty surgery:

- The operated area can take four to eight weeks to heal. This may be longer for patients who have diabetes or who actively smoke. During healing it is common for the ear to leak a small amount blood-stained discharge
- The wound site can become infected which would likely affect how quickly your ear heals
- Scarring – the ear entrance skin will scar and look different to the opposite ear, but most people don't notice these changes
- Rarely patients can experience numbness around the edges of the wound site
- Occasionally patients can develop an allergy to the dressing that is used inside the ear to help it heal.

Are there any alternatives?

There is no other way to widen the outer ear canal. If you choose not to have the procedure, you may continue to have problems with ear infections and require microsuction to remove ear wax.

How can I prepare for meatoplasty surgery?

- Arrange two weeks off work (if you require a sick certificate please ask the nurse on the day of your surgery)
- Arrange for someone to come and pick you up after the surgery. This is because you cannot drive for 24 hours after a general anaesthetic. Occasionally the procedure is performed under local anaesthetic
- Bring all the medication you are currently taking with you on the day of your surgery
- Make sure you have pain killers at home such as paracetamol and ibuprofen (unless your GP has told you can't take these drugs)
- Inform the hospital if you have a cold, flu or tonsillitis in the two weeks before admission as your operation may need to be postponed

Asking for your consent

It is important that you feel involved in decisions about your care. For some treatments you will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you agree to have the treatment and understand what it involves. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have said yes previously. If you would like more details about our consent process, please ask for a copy of our policy.

What happens during meatoplasty surgery?

Please remember that your surgeon will confirm how your surgery is performed and finalise your aftercare plan with you as practices sometimes slightly vary. The below is a general guide.

The operation takes around 40 to 60 minutes. We would expect you to be able to go home on the same day, but always bring an overnight bag just in case. The surgery is performed by making a few small cuts in the ear canal entrance and removing some of the excess skin, tissue and very occasionally bone.

Will I feel any pain?

It is common to experience a dull, occasionally throbbing pain in the ear after the surgery. Most patients don't require more than simple painkillers.

What happens after meatoplasty surgery?

There will often be a yellow antiseptic ribbon in the ear canal to protect things while healing takes place. There is often a squelching sound or popping in the ear when chewing or yawning, this is normal. The ear

will often leak fluid for several days to weeks after the surgery, this is also normal. Occasionally you may see bright red blood, particularly in the first 24 to 72 hours after surgery. You may have to have several changes of the ear canal dressings as the ear heals over several weeks.

What do I need to do after I go home?

- There will be cotton wool at the entrance to the canal; you need to change this when it gets soaked with liquid. This may be several times a day immediately after surgery but may be only once a day a few days after surgery. Please insert a new piece of cotton wool at least once a day.
- If the yellow wick that sits in the ear sticks to the cotton wool, slowly pull the wool off and push the wick back down your ear canal with your little finger. Trim any excess wick with a pair of scissors. Make sure you wash your hands with soap and water before touching the ear or dressing.
- Try to sneeze with your mouth open, and don't blow your nose for the first two weeks after surgery to prevent build-up of pressure in the ear. It is fine to sniff as needed.
- There will be paper-like strips if you have a wound behind the ear. You can remove these gently after seven days.
- You should keep the ear dry until your surgeon tells you that you can get it wet: ask at your post-op appointment. When washing hair, please cover the ear canal with a piece of cotton wool covered in Vaseline. In addition, you can use an empty clean yoghurt carton, or similar, to put over the ear and it is easier if there is someone to help you. Being able to go swimming depends upon the type of surgery and healing speed, so please ask your surgeon.
- Work/school: You should be off work for seven to ten days, depending upon how you feel. One of the main reasons is to try to prevent you picking up a cold when mixing with other people. If you feel up to it, and have the sort of job that allows, you may be able to work from within about five days. If you need a medical certificate for your employer please ask your nurse before you leave hospital, otherwise your GP can give you one.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Yes, you will be asked to return to the clinic to check your progress or to have any ear pack/dressing removed. Usually you will be asked to come to the clinic at two, four and 6 weeks after the operation for change of the dressing/review of the wound..

Useful sources of information

You may visit www.nhs.uk, www.patient.co.uk and www.entuk.org/patient-information-leaflets to read more about meatoplasty surgery.