

# About stapedectomy

*This leaflet gives information about a type of ear surgery. Please ask staff any questions you have.*

## **What is stapedectomy?**

A stapedectomy is an operation to replace the stapes (one of the three bones in the middle ear) with a man-made substitute (prosthesis). It is necessary because the stapes has become fixed and will not vibrate to send sound waves to the brain (a condition called otosclerosis) leading to deafness in that ear.

## **Why have a stapedectomy?**

The operation improves your hearing.

## **How is the operation done?**

A small cut is made in front of the ear. The rest of the operation takes place through your ear passage.

The operation takes between 30 minutes and two hours. Some surgeons use a laser, and we will discuss this at your out-patient appointment.

## **Before your operation**

Arrange for two weeks off work and check that you have a relative or friend who can take you home and look after you for the first few days after the operation.

We may ask you to attend the pre-assessment clinic, either on the day of your out-patient clinic appointment or following a telephone health questionnaire. This is to ensure that you are fit for your surgery.

Although rare, there are some risks in having this operation which you should discuss with your doctor (eg. if the inner ear is damaged during the operation, it can cause hearing loss or deafness - this is why the poor hearing ear is normally selected for surgery first).

## **Will I have to stay in hospital?**

Not necessarily. If your operation is straightforward and we think that your general state of health and home circumstances are suitable, you will be able to go home on the day of your operation. We will tell you before you come into hospital whether you can go home on the same day as your operation, or whether you need to stay in overnight.

## **Ear dressings**

The ear passage is filled with tiny pieces of an antiseptic gauze dressing or a single gauze dressing. These stay in place for 2-3 weeks and are removed in the out-patient clinic.

A piece of cotton wool is placed in the outer part of your ear and you will need to change this every day.

## **Stitches**

You may have stitches where the cut was. These can be removed at your GP surgery about 5-7 days after your operation. Take care when showering and washing your hair not to get the ear or the wound wet as this can cause an infection.

## **Will I be able to hear soon after the operation?**

Your hearing will be muffled or you may have little hearing in that ear whilst the dressing is in.

You may notice a strange squelching, popping or buzzing noise in your ear. This is due to the dressing - it usually stops when the dressing is removed.

## **Does it hurt?**

You may have some discomfort in your ear when you open & close your mouth or if you lie on that ear. You may experience some soreness and swelling after the operation - ordinary painkillers should help this.

If the ear becomes very painful, it may mean it is infected - you should see your GP.

### **Will I get dizziness or sickness?**

You may get some dizziness for a few days after the operation. It can also occur if you turn your head quickly or bend down suddenly. You may also feel sick if you lift your head quickly, and we can give you medicine to stop this.

### **How long will I be off work?**

You will need to rest at home for at least 2 weeks, as you may continue to feel dizzy and tired. This will steadily improve. If you do lifting and carrying at work or your job requires a lot of bending and tipping of your head, you may need to take a further 1-2 weeks off work. When you come in for the operation tell your nurse if you require a sick certificate on discharge.

### **When will I come back to the out-patient clinic?**

We send you an appointment, usually 2-3 weeks after your operation.

### **After leaving hospital: looking after your ear**

- Keep your ear and the wound dry. Take care when showering and washing your hair, to avoid infection. Place a piece of cotton wool covered in vaseline in the ear to prevent water getting into the ear. This also means you cannot go swimming until you have seen your doctor in the out-patient clinic.
- Change the cotton wool in your ear daily - always wash your hands before and after. Take care not to remove the ear dressing with the pack - if it sticks to the cotton wool then cut it close to the cotton wool, but do not pull the dressing out.
- Itchiness & redness is rare, and it may mean you are allergic to the dressing. If you experience it, contact the ward on the number on the next page.

## **Things to avoid as they can damage the graft and cause pain**

- Avoid blowing your nose violently - blow it gently from side to side. If you need to sneeze, try to do so with your mouth open.
- Try to avoid contact with family and friends who have colds for the first month, as there is a risk that a cold could lead to an ear infection which would destroy the graft while it is healing. If you catch a cold you should go to your doctor.
- Until advised by the hospital, avoid changes in atmospheric pressure which cause your ear to 'pop' as this may damage the graft (eg. underground tunnels and aeroplanes).
- Avoid all strenuous sporting activities and straining until you have been seen in out-patients.
- Some patients mention their taste is affected on one side of their tongue. This will improve with time.
- A small amount of discharge is normal. If the discharge becomes smelly or heavily blood-stained, or if your dizziness has not improved after a week, or if you have severe pain around the ear then contact the ward (on the number below).
- If you experience a sudden loss of hearing in your operated ear, you should also contact the ward.

If you are worried about your ear once you are at home, contact your GP or the ward on the following number:

**If you would like a large print or audio version of this information, please ask a member of staff.**

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