



Family Education Sheet



Home Care Instructions for Patients after Ear Construction

This sheet gives you information on how to care for your child after ear construction.

Head Dressing

Your child will have a dressing on his or her head. Keep this dressing clean and dry. Keep the dressing on until the surgeon removes it at your follow up appointment. You will get instructions for the use of a head band at that time.

Skin Care

- Your child may have a sponge bath at home. Your child's doctor will tell you when it's okay to have a tub bath or shower.
- If rib cartilage graft was used for the ear construction, your child will have a dressing over the donor site on the chest. Leave this dressing in place until your child returns for a follow-up visit.
- Once the dressing is off, wash the area with soap and water and pat it dry with a soft, clean towel.
- Your child will have a Steri-Strip® on the donor site once the dressing is removed. Steri-Strips® are narrow pieces of special tape that keep the edges of the wound together. Whenever the Steri-Strips® are loose or falling off, replace them. After 1 month, the Steri-Strips® do not need to be replaced.

Nutrition

- Your child can return to his or her regular diet at home.

Activity

- Once at home, your child does not need to stay in bed. He or she can walk and play quietly. Avoid any trauma to the ear.
- Avoid touching the head dressing or the donor site on the chest.
- Your child should avoid rough play, including gym and contact sports, for 6 weeks after operation. Your child's doctor or nurse will tell you when it is best for your child to return to gym and sports.
- Do not let your child lift anything heavier than 10 pounds until approved by your child's physician.
- Your child's doctor or nurse will tell you when your child can return to day care or school.

Pain

- Your child may have some discomfort at home. Pain may cause your child to become irritable or not eat well.
- Give your child acetaminophen (also known as Tylenol®) to help relieve the pain. Acetaminophen comes as a tablet, caplet, and liquid. It is used to relieve mild to moderate pain and to reduce fever. It is very important to take acetaminophen exactly as directed by your doctor. Follow the directions on the package and ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain any part you do not understand. Do not take more or less of it than prescribed by your doctor. Do not take it any more often than prescribed by your doctor.
- Your child's doctor or nurse may prescribe pain medicine. If the pain does not go away 1 hour after giving acetaminophen or ibuprofen, give the pain medicine as prescribed and instructed by your doctor and nurse.
- Try to schedule a dose of pain medicine around bedtime, especially for the first few days at home. This may help your child to sleep better.

Constipation

- Once at home, your child should return to his or her normal bowel habits. Keep track of your child's bowel habits. If your child does not return to their normal bowel habits, he or she may be constipated.
- Call your child's doctor or nurse if you think your child is constipated.

Emotional Recovery

- After the operation, your child may be tired or irritable. It is important that he or she rest.
- Healing for each child is different. In time (usually about one month), your child will return to his or her usual mood and activity level.

Follow-up

- Your child will need to see his or her doctor within one week of the operation. Call the doctor's office to arrange for the follow-up appointment.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor or Nurse

- Call if your child:
 - ❖ has a fever higher than 100.5°F (taken under the arm);
 - ❖ has bleeding, redness, swelling or drainage at the donor site or ear;
 - ❖ has pain that doesn't go away after giving the pain medicine;
 - ❖ is not drinking liquids or is vomiting; or
 - ❖ is irritable and cannot be comforted.
- Call if you have any questions or concerns.

A ***Spanish*** version of this is available from your provider
Send comments or questions to: Familyed@childrens.harvard.edu
