



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Mastoid surgery

Department of Maxillofacial Surgery

Patient information

What is mastoid surgery?

The mastoid bone is part of the skull, just behind the ear. It contains lots of air spaces called mastoid air cells. It is connected to the middle ear. Mastoid surgery involves removing part of the mastoid air cells.

Why do I need this operation?

Mastoid surgery is usually performed when there is either chronic infection in the middle ear that involves the mastoid bone or a collection of skin growing into the middle ear, known as a cholesteatoma. Surgery is the only effective way to get rid of a cholesteatoma.

What can I expect before the operation?

Before the day of your operation you will be seen at pre-assessment clinic. You will also be screened for MRSA with swabs from your throat/nose/armpit or groin. If you have other medical problems, you might also have an appointment arranged for you with an anaesthetist (the doctor that puts you to sleep for the operation).

What happens on the day of my operation?

On the day of surgery you will be admitted to a ward where nursing staff will go through some paper work with you. You will be seen by a member of the surgical team. They will go through the operation and consent form with you.

You will also be seen by an anaesthetist who will discuss how you will be put to sleep and answer any questions you may have about this.

After your operation, you will come back to the ward to recover. After a few hours, once you have fully recovered, you will be able to go home.

Will I need to fast before the operation?

You will be asked to stop eating six hours before coming into hospital for your surgery and not to drink anything other than clear fluids up to two hours before coming into hospital. Clear fluids are water, black tea and black coffee.

What does the operation involve?

Mastoid surgery can be done in several different ways. This depends on the extent of the disease and the surgeon. It can also take between one to three hours depending on what needs to be done. Your surgeon will discuss the details of what they are going to do before the operation.

Mastoid surgery is performed under a general anaesthetic, meaning you will be asleep. All mastoid operations involve a cut, usually behind the ear but sometimes it can be above and in front of the ear. Areas of the mastoid bone will be removed leaving a defect called a mastoid cavity.

What are the risks?

Any operation involves some risks, your surgeon will be able to discuss specific complications in your case. The risks can include:

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Facial weakness. This is a rare complication due to damage of the nerve which supplies the face. This weakness can be temporary or permanent
- Dizziness
- Tinnitus
- Loss of hearing. This may occur when the disease is very extensive
- Change in taste.

What can I expect after the operation?

Your ear will have a dressing inside and you will have a head bandage on. This will affect the hearing in your ear. Some people go home the same day but others may need to stay in overnight. The head bandage will be removed before you go home. The dressing will remain in the ear, usually for a few weeks, and removed when you are seen in clinic.

You may experience some pain from the operation but your doctor will prescribe painkillers to help with this.

You may have a small amount of discharge from the ear. This is usually from the dressing. The discharge can also be blood-stained.

If some of the packing in your ear falls out do not worry. Just leave the rest in place.

You should keep your ear dry and be particularly careful when showering or washing your hair.

Your stitches can be removed one to two weeks after the operation at your GP practice.

How long will I be off work?

Two weeks.

What about follow up?

You will be seen in clinic after your procedure. The packing from your ear will be removed in the ENT clinic at this time.

Contact information

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Appointment booking centre

0300 303 8360

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If you have any special requirements (eg. related to religion) or any access issues (eg. related to loss of vision or disability) then please do not hesitate to contact the Hickstead pre-assessment clinic for further advice / information.

**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care
in Brighton and Hove hospitals.**

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