

Surgery for Cholesteatoma

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a cholesteatoma?

A cholesteatoma is where a sac of dead skin cells forms in a pocket in your middle ear. The cholesteatoma will slowly get larger and eventually fill your middle ear and mastoid bone. The cholesteatoma can cause an unpleasant-smelling discharge and loss of hearing.

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to remove the cholesteatoma and stop the discharge. It may be possible to improve your hearing at the same time.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Surgery is the only way to remove the cholesteatoma.

Regular cleaning and antibiotics will help to keep any unpleasant-smelling discharge or infection under control.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes 2 to 3 hours.

Your surgeon will make a cut in front of or behind your ear. They will remove bone from around the cholesteatoma to see where it has spread to, and remove it.

Your surgeon may need to remove the bone of your ear canal so they can remove all the cholesteatoma. If this happens, they will shape the bone behind your ear (mastoid bone) into a cavity that opens into your ear.

How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start

exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

General complications of any operation

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Chest infection

Specific complications of this operation

- Hearing loss
- Numbness of your ear
- Damage to the facial nerve
- Change of taste
- Dizziness
- Tinnitus (ringing in your ear)
- Ear discharge
- Allergic reaction
- Some cholesteatoma being left behind

Consequences of this procedure

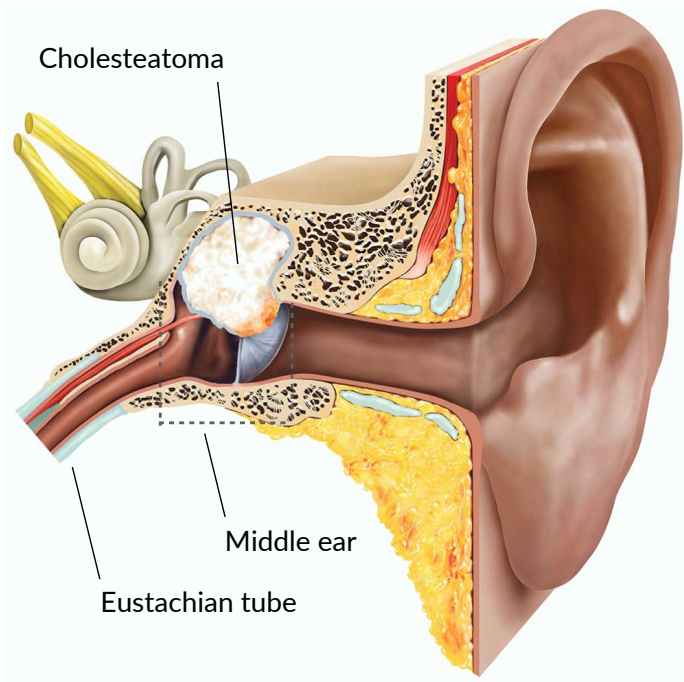
- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of your skin

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the next day.

You should be able to return to work after about 3 weeks.

If your surgeon needed to shape your mastoid bone into a cavity, you will probably need to come



A cholesteatoma in the middle ear

back to the clinic several times in the first few months until the cavity has healed completely.

Protect your ear from water using cotton wool and Vaseline, and do not swim until your surgeon has told you that your ear has healed.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery. However, if the bone of your ear canal was not removed, some cholesteatoma may be left behind.

Summary

A cholesteatoma can damage your ear and cause serious complications. Surgery is the only way you can be cured.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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