



PAEDIATRIC ENT SERVICES

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ATTICOTOMY and RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DEFECT

These procedures are usually performed if there is evidence of a retraction of the ear drum in the upper weak part of the ear drum which is causing concern, for chronic ear infections or for the eradication of Cholesteatoma. The condition known as Cholesteatoma, or Skin Cyst, which can develop if the retraction pocket enlarges to the extent that it cannot be completely seen and starts to cause discharge, or infection and damage to vital structures such as the bones of hearing, balance, facial nerve and rarely the tissue around the brain or the brain itself.

Usually the *Atticotomy* procedure can be performed through the ear canal, and involves lifting up the ear drum in that area and either curetting or drilling out overhanging bone so that the whole area of the retraction pocket can be seen and removed. Usually, because the ear drum area has been weakened, we strengthen it with a piece of tragal cartilage, usually obtained from the ear canal itself. This will strengthen the ear drum in that area and prevent further retraction of the drum.

Complications arising postoperatively may include (1) hearing loss, either temporary or permanent, (2) recurrence of the retraction pocket despite the treatment, (3) persistence of some skin in the middle ear that has not been able to be detected causing cholesteatoma and requiring a more surgery, and (4) remote risks of damage to the facial nerve or to the bones of hearing (the risk of total hearing loss is less than 1:1000 and the risk of damage to the facial nerve is 1:10,000 operations) and dizziness rarely.

There is a risk of postoperative infection, but this is uncommon due to the administration of antibiotics postoperatively. Occasionally a grommet tube is inserted in the ear drum to relieve the pressure on the healing drum. If a tube has been inserted, it is necessary to keep water out of the ear canal at all times. There may be some packing in the ear which should be left intact until you see the doctor post-op. Overall, these procedures of the ear drum, middle ear and mastoid bone are relatively safe major ear procedures with excellent results.

