

Ear shaping at birth may help end bullying in children with ear deformities

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Before

After

Before and after of baby with Ear Buddies

Ear Buddies

Over 200,000 children each year are born with ear deformities of one kind or another. Many of these children suffer [bullying](#) and ridicule from kindergarten, on into high school and even adulthood due to their [ears](#) protruding or otherwise looking abnormally prominent.

According to Dr. David Gault, a renowned plastic and reconstructive surgeon and expert in childhood ear deformities who practices in London, England, last year 5% of newborn babies in the U.S. were born with misshaped ears.

Ear defects such as bat ear, lop ear, cup ear, rim kinks, folded over helical rim, Stahl's bar, ear tags and clefts are increasingly common. In another 2% of babies, their ears were normal at birth, but began to protrude and stick out at around three months of age.

"When a baby is born the cartilage framework of the ears is extremely soft due to the mother's estrogen hormones," says Dr. Gault. "During birth, some compression on a baby's ears is natural, but if the ears remain an odd shape forty eight hours after delivery, or if they begin to show signs of protrusion, this irregularity will quickly become permanent as the cartilage in the ear hardens."

But there is hope. And for those parents that want to be involved in their children's future health, applying easy to use ear splints to their child's ears in the first few months of life might possibly be the answer. Ear Buddies™ are easy to use ear splints that parents can fit themselves to reshape the cartilage folds in a baby's ears to restore the natural curves, and to hold the ear close to the side of the head.

They first debuted at the U.S. Naval Hospital in San Diego and at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. The splints shape the ear naturally, allowing the framework of the ear to harden into a controlled shape that becomes a permanent, surgery free correction.

"The splints are easily fitted at home so that parents can help their children obtain normal shaped ears from day one," said Dr. Gault. "The pressure of the splint resets the natural spring of the ear cartilage correcting any tendency to make the ears protrude while reshaping the proper contours of the rest of the ear."

Dr. Gault warns that parents do not simply stick the child's ear to the side of the head as this can distort the shape of the ear, particularly the rim. Depending on the baby's age, Dr. Gault recommends two weeks of splintage at birth or one month of splintage from one week to one month of age, two months of splintage at two months of age, three months at three months, and so on.

"The younger the baby, the shorter the amount of time needed to correct the problem," continued Dr. Gault. "Older babies may need a couple of extra months using Ear Buddies, but if they are breast fed the cartilage stays softer for longer so it can accept the new shape and, when the mother stops breast feeding, the cartilage hardens enough (like a jelly) to remember it permanently."

While most plastic surgeons will say that correction of ear deformities at birth is best, for those ears that were not corrected at birth Otoplasty, or ear correction surgery, is still an option.

Long Beach, California board certified plastic surgeons Marcel Daniels, M.D., F.A.C.S., regularly sees children, teenagers and adults for ear correction surgery.

Dr. Daniels notes, "Children can often be cruel and even bullying to others who look different. I recently performed Otoplasty on a nine year old boy whose self-esteem has grown tremendously since he had surgery. Ear Buddies administered at birth may have helped him avoid those years of bullying."

Otoplasty can be quite a complicated surgical procedure due to the delicate and complex framework of the ear itself. However, in the hands of a qualified plastic surgeon, the ear can be shaped and repositioned. Even correction of minor deformities can have a profound benefit to the appearance and self-esteem of a person as bullying has become a very real concern with 1 in 4 children in the USA begin bullied on a daily basis.

Sources: www.earbuddies.com, www.imagemd.com, www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr62/nvsr62, www.bullyingstatistics.org



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