

# Ear Shape Abnormalities

*Patient Information Series – What you should know, what you should ask.*

## **What are ear shape abnormalities?**

There are many kinds of ear shape abnormalities. Ear shape abnormalities can include constricted ears also called lop or cup ears. There can also be other malformations of the helix or outer ear like helical clefts or creases. Prominent ears can also be seen on ultrasound.

## **What causes abnormally shaped ears?**

Most cases of abnormal ear shape are sporadic meaning the development of the condition is random and has no known cause. There are also cases of ear shape abnormalities that are familial, or run in the family, without an associated genetic syndrome.

Some cases of abnormal ear shape are caused by genetic syndromes. Genetic syndromes are diseases caused by mutations or differences in genetic information. Genetic syndromes often cause multiple anomalies.

## **Should I have more tests done?**

You should ask if a specialised/advanced ultrasound of the baby during the pregnancy can be performed to see if the baby has other anomalies or if the abnormal ear shape is the only issue. If there are additional anomalies, a consultation with a genetic specialist is usually recommended to determine if there may be a causative genetic syndrome. You may be offered diagnostic invasive genetic testing to see if certain genetic changes are the cause.

Not all patients choose to undergo this kind of testing. You should discuss with your doctor to determine what decision is right for you and your family. However, if there are no other anomalies seen on ultrasound and invasive genetic testing gives normal results, then the abnormal ear shape is more likely to be isolated and unrelated to a genetic cause.

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## **What are the things to watch for during the pregnancy?**

If there are no other anomalies, then you can have your pregnancy checks as normally planned. If there are other anomalies, changes in your care will depend on what they are and what they mean.

## **What does it mean for my baby after it is born?**

When an ear shape anomaly is isolated, meaning no other anomaly exists, they do not affect the function of the ear. There are several methods for cosmetic correction if desired. Sometimes ear molding can be performed immediately after birth. In other cases, surgical treatment is pursued in later in childhood.

## **Will it happen again?**

The chance of abnormal ear shape affecting a subsequent child depends on the underlying reason for the condition. You should meet with a geneticist to discuss your specific chance of having another child with an ear shape abnormality.

## **What other questions should I ask?**

- Are there any other abnormalities on the ultrasound?
- What kind of genetic screening or testing should I consider?
- How often should I have ultrasound examinations?
- Where should I deliver?
- Can I meet the team of doctors that will be assisting my baby when it is born in advance?

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