

**Disclaimer:** This leaflet provides general information and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice. It is essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional for any health concerns or before making any decisions related to your health or treatment.

### What is a Pre-Auricular Sinus?

A pre-auricular sinus is a small, narrow tract or passage under the skin that doesn't belong there. It's a congenital condition, meaning it's present from birth. It typically appears as a tiny opening or pit, often located just in front of the ear, where the ear cartilage meets the face. This opening can be so small that it's easily overlooked. The tract itself extends beneath the skin and can sometimes have branches. While usually harmless, it can occasionally become infected.

### Why Might I Need a Pre-Auricular Sinus Excision?

Most pre-auricular sinuses don't cause any problems and don't require treatment. However, if the sinus becomes infected, it can lead to pain, swelling, redness, and discharge of pus. Recurrent infections are the primary reason for recommending surgical removal (excision) of the sinus. Excision helps prevent future infections and associated discomfort.

### What Happens Before Surgery?

Before surgery, you'll have a consultation with Mr Hariri, where we will discuss the procedure, its benefits, and potential risks. We'll also review your medical history and may arrange for some routine tests, such as blood tests, to ensure you're fit for surgery.

We'll provide you with specific instructions on how to prepare for the surgery, including fasting guidelines (typically, you'll need to avoid food and drink for a certain period before the operation). We will also discuss any medications you're currently taking, as some may need to be adjusted or temporarily stopped before surgery.

### What Happens During Surgery?

The surgery is usually performed under general anaesthesia, meaning you'll be asleep throughout the procedure. A small incision is made around the opening of the sinus, and the entire tract, including any branches, is carefully removed. The surrounding tissue is also examined to ensure complete removal. The incision is then closed with stitches or special skin glue, and a dressing is applied. The procedure typically takes about an hour to complete.

### What Happens After Surgery?

After surgery, you'll be monitored in a recovery area until you're fully awake. You may experience some mild discomfort or pain, which can be managed with painkillers. You'll be given instructions on how to care for the surgical wound, including keeping it clean and dry. A special skin glue is often used as a protective dressing, allowing you to shower straight away. However, it's essential to pat the area dry gently with a clean towel and avoid scrubbing or rubbing the wound.

Most people can go home the same day or the day after surgery. You'll have a follow-up appointment with Mr Hariri about a week later to check on your healing progress and remove any non-dissolving stitches.

### What are the Potential Risks and Complications?

While pre-auricular sinus excision is generally a safe procedure, like any surgery, it carries some potential risks and complications, including:

- **Infection:** There's a small risk of infection at the surgical site. This is usually treated with antibiotics.
- **Bleeding:** Some bleeding is normal, but excessive bleeding is rare.
- **Scarring:** A small scar will remain after the incision heals. While we strive to minimize scarring, its appearance can vary depending on individual healing.
- **Recurrence:** In rare cases, the sinus may not be completely removed, and a new sinus can form.

- **Facial Nerve Injury:** The facial nerve, which controls facial movements, runs near the parotid gland (the salivary gland near the ear). While extremely rare, there's a minimal risk of injury to this nerve during surgery, which could cause temporary or, in very rare instances, permanent facial weakness.
- **Numbness:** You may experience some temporary numbness around the incision site, which usually resolves over time.

### **Long-Term Outlook**

The long-term outlook after pre-auricular sinus excision is excellent. Once the sinus is removed, the risk of recurring infections is significantly reduced or eliminated.

### **Recovery and Returning to Normal Activities**

Most people recover quickly after pre-auricular sinus excision. You can usually return to most normal activities within a few days, avoiding strenuous exercise or heavy lifting for a week or two. As mentioned earlier, the use of special skin glue allows for showering immediately after surgery, but it's crucial to keep the area clean and dry by patting it gently with a clean towel.

### **Living with a Pre-Auricular Sinus**

If your pre-auricular sinus isn't causing any problems, you may not need surgery. However, it's essential to be aware of the signs of infection, such as pain, swelling, redness, and discharge. If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your GP or Mr Hariri promptly. Early treatment of infection can help prevent complications and reduce the likelihood of needing surgery in the future.