

Listen up: There's
a smooth, new
technique for
ear pinning.

BY JEF CATAPANG

Now ear this!

It's the dress that usually defines a prom outfit for most girls, but for 18-year-old Camila Ossandon, it was also the simple act of wearing her hair up for a change. Two years ago, Ossandon underwent incisionless otoplasty surgery to prevent her ears from protruding—a condition that made her self-conscious and afraid to sport a ponytail.

"I never really liked my ears," Ossandon says. "They weren't big—they just stuck out. My ears looked like I was missing some cartilage and they would always get cold. It could be 30 degrees outside and my ears would still be freezing," she says.

Ossandon and her family sought out the expertise of Dr. Andres Gantous, founder of the Toronto Facial Plastic Clinic. Gantous, an authoritative plastic surgeon and well-respected instructor at the University of Toronto, recommended incisionless otoplasty over traditional otoplasty surgery for Ossandon. He recommends it to almost all patients seeking to fix large, protruding or deformed ears.

"Most patients are candidates for the procedure," Gantous says, explaining that the newer, groundbreaking incisionless operation can replace 90 percent of traditional otoplasty cases. Only more serious deformities would require the traditional open technique.

The cut-free procedure means not having to deal with a wound. "This decreases pain, swelling and post-op complications," Gantous says. The same sutures used in traditional otoplasty are also used in the incisionless procedure, but they are buried permanently under the skin by "going into the same hole we came out of," Gantous explains. The normal shape of the ear is recreated by inserting two to four stitches per side, which sets the ear back in place.

Gantous says the procedure especially appeals to adults who are uneasy about the idea of going under general anesthetic. In terms of cost, the procedure is covered under OHIP for kids up to the age of 18. For adults, the price tag is about the same as traditional otoplasty. ▶



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Price comparability aside, perhaps the most appealing advantage of incisionless otoplasty is the quick recovery time. “You can walk out of the operation without a bandage,” Gantous says. “You could even be back at work the next day.” Patients wear a protective headband for the first two weeks and are advised to avoid any rough exercise, especially contact sports or any other activity where the ear may fold over.

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During her recovery time, Ossandon couldn’t wear earrings and had to be careful when showering. “And I couldn’t sleep on

my side. I had to sleep on my back or on my stomach,” she adds. At first, she was skeptical about the results; her ears stung and they didn’t appear as she thought they would. “My ears looked all purple, and they didn’t look very nice. I thought, ‘Omigod, this is going to look horrible!’”

But within two weeks the discoloration receded and the stinging sensation subsided. Ossandon found herself taking pride in her new appearance. “My ears looked nice,” she says. “I didn’t even remember myself with my old ones.”

Ossandon isn’t self-conscious anymore. She often wears her hair up, as she did for her prom, and plans to do so for her wedding someday. She also relishes shorter hairstyles now and buys more earrings. And her ears don’t feel chilly anymore. “I wake up in the morning and I put my hair up. It just feels natural. I don’t focus on my ears anymore,” she says.

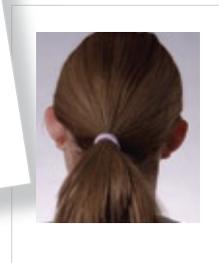
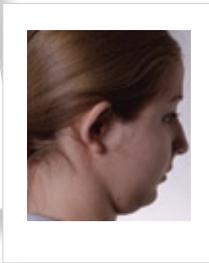
There are no scars to remind Ossandon of the surgery, and she frequently forgets she ever underwent an otoplasty procedure. “Whenever I go to the doctor or dentist and they ask if I’ve had any surgeries in the last five years, I forget to mention it,” she laughs. “It’s just that natural and it looks that good.” 

Name: Camila

Age: 18

Procedure: Incisionless otoplasty surgery

Surgeon: Dr. Andres Gantous



A Kinder Way To Pin Back Ears

Traditional otoplasty, or “ear pinning” surgery, is accomplished by making incisions behind the ears, through which cartilage can be removed and/or the ear’s fold is reshaped. The procedure results in dressings, stitches that later require removal and an overall recovery period that can last for months. Incisionless otoplasty, on the

other hand, buries the permanent sutures, which reshape the ear, into the skin’s deep tissues. The sutures are inserted by entering and exiting through the same point, scored by a needle. As a result, recovery time is reduced and chances of post-op complications are greatly decreased.