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Life / Health

Ear lobe reconstruction has become 'generational phenomenon'

Some people who stretched their ear lobes for various reasons are now having the surgery to fit into more conservative office cultures

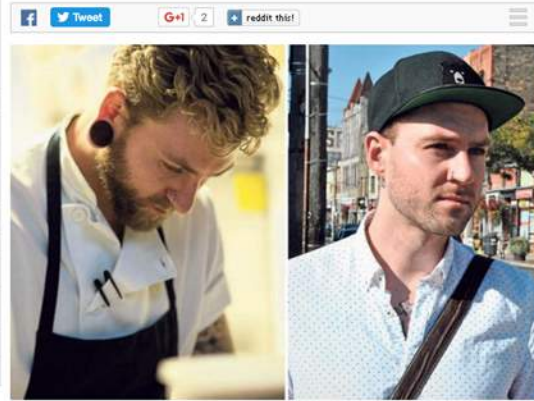


IMAGE ON LEFT PROVIDED BY BRADFORD WAGNER, AT RIGHT, TAKEN BY PERRY KING
Bradford Wagner, 29, received earlobe reconstruction surgery last year after first expanding his lobes at 18.

By: Perry King Metro Published on Mon Oct 10 2016

Bradford Wagner was a huge metalhead in his teens, and he had the one-and-a-half inch earlobes to show for it. Punched out and expanded to fit spacers when he was 18, his lobes were part of Wagner's immersion into the underground music scene.

"A lot of my peers then had them, and I liked the look of them and, to be frank, I wanted to fit in." But as he neared the end of his 20s, fading from punk and working as a sous chef in Toronto's financial district, Wagner began re-evaluating those dangling lobes.

"It was a new phase in my life and I needed a change," said Wagner, now 29.

Wagner is not alone — many young people who have stretched their lobes for various reasons are considering repairing them. Dr. Kristina Zakhary, a Calgary-based plastic surgeon who specializes in head and neck procedures, has repaired about 50 pairs this year alone — about four procedures a month on average. Though procedures have been done in the past to reset torn and stretched ears, the surgery has become a "generational phenomenon," she says.

"They have grown tired of the stretched earlobes, or they're entering into a field of work where it's a little more conservative, and they don't want to have a non-conservative appearance," said Dr. Zakhary, who has been practising for 12 years.

"Typically they're young; there's an even proportion of males to females," she added. "Usually, they're between age of 18 to, I would say, 40, and they're usually people who have had their earlobes stretched with those circular earrings and have changed their minds about (them) because of different factors."

When Wagner was committed to repairing his ears, he did his research and eventually worked with Dr. Marc DuPere at the Visage Clinic in Toronto to have it done.

Dr. DuPere, who performs the surgery 50 to 70 times a year, has seen similar increasing interest in the procedure.

"Many did it when (they were) younger and now see some obstruction to a better job in a highly competitive market, along with the 'expected' look that someone should have in a more conservative professional environment," wrote Dr. DuPere in an e-mail.

Wagner wasn't worried about his appearance at all, but felt the move was necessary for his personal growth.

"I consider myself a new person, almost," he said.

Lending their ears

Earlobe reconstruction is seen as non-invasive and relatively quick compared to other cosmetic procedures — about half an hour per ear. The surgery is done under local anesthesia and the lobes are closed with sutures and stitches are put in place. There are minor complications, including swelling and pain after the anesthesia subsides — patients are given a few Advil or Tylenol at most. Most patients return to school/work the next day. All the ears look good as new after the scarring has subsided.

- It takes 30 minutes per ear, on average.
- The stitches are in for 7-10 days
- You have to refrain from wearing earrings for 6-8 weeks

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