Split earlobe repair with piercing preservation and optimal earlobe aesthetics

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SURGICAL CHALLENGE

A split earlobe deformity (Fig 1, *A*) presents several challenges for reconstruction, including avoiding recurrence, repeat piercing desired by the patient, and notching of the ear lobe margin. A z-plasty is often recommended to prevent notching; however, this technique both narrows and lengthens the earlobe, creating an unnatural and unaesthetic shape. The use of an asymmetric z-plasty[1] in combination with a curvilinear modification[2] of the medial earlobe segment prevents shortening, allows for immediate repiercing at the original position, prevents recurrence, and provides an optimal aesthetic earlobe shape.

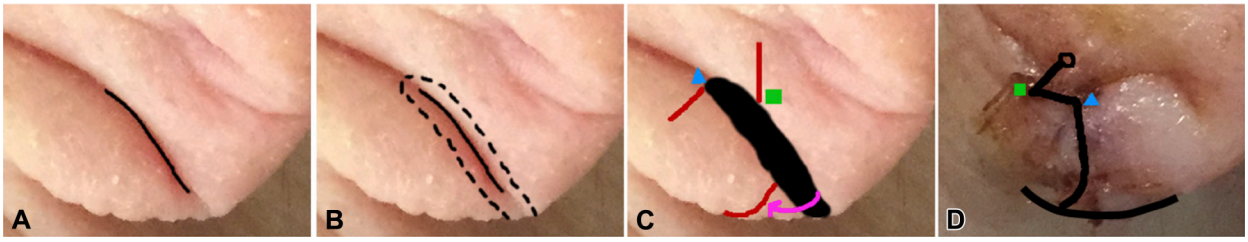

Fig 1. **A**, Original ear defect. **B**, Defect after sharp debridement, with new edges shown by *dashed line*. **C**, Flap development achieved through incisions at *red lines*, with markers (*blue triangle* and *green square*). *Purple arrow* shows closure at the bottom of the lobe. **D**, Final shape of scar and location of markers (*blue triangle* and *green square*).

SOLUTION

The central portion of the split earlobe is sharply debrided to provide perpendicular wound edges (Fig 1, *B*). A flap is developed from the lateral split earlobe to be inserted into a perpendicular incision created in the medial split earlobe (Fig 1, *C* and *D*). This step lengthens the entire earlobe repair but selectively lengthens the lateral split earlobe segment more. The medial segment is elongated with a curvilinear incision to compensate for the longer lateral segment. A curvilinear earlobe margin inset has been shown to have superior cosmetic outcomes for earlobe reconstruction.[2] A patient-supplied, light-weight stud earring is placed at the superior aspect of the repair and is left in place for a month. The position of the original hole is preserved, but the new hole diameter is determined by the width of the stud earring's post. Use of an asymmetric z-plasty in combination with a curvilinear repair of the earlobe margin recreates the natural lobule shape and preserves the original piercing (Fig 2, *A-D*).

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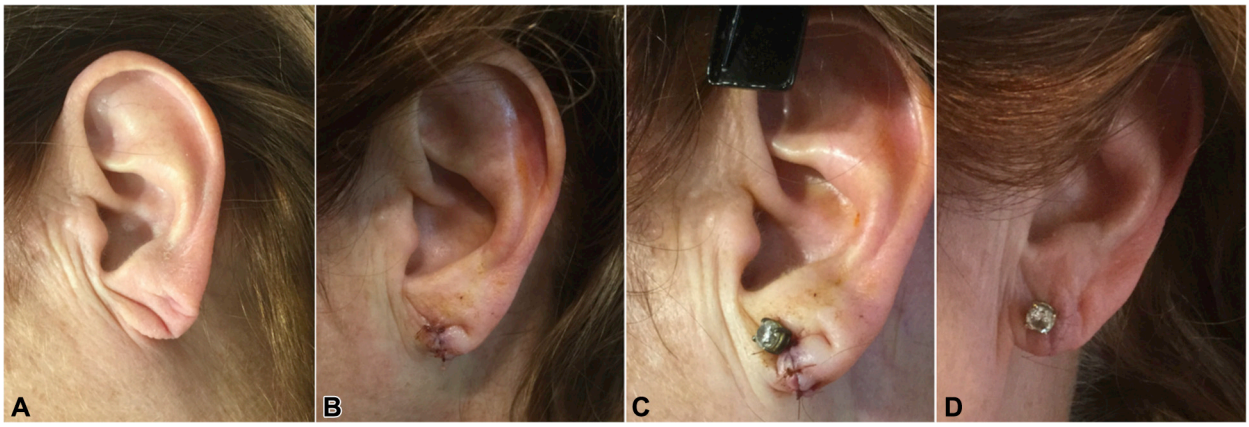

Fig 2. **A**, Almost complete split earlobe. **B** and **C**, After reconstruction with and without an earring in place. **D**, Healing at 2-week follow-up visit.

REFERENCES

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