

Working life (otorhinolaryngology)

This page provides useful information on the working week as well as any [on call](#) [1] and other commitments, along with information on who you will work with. The attractions and challenges of the job are also in this section.

“Being an ENT surgeon can be fascinating, every day is different. I spend time in adult or paediatric clinics and ENT casualty clinics. There are Theatre lists for adult patients and for children. The surgery can include working with endoscopes or microscopes and often there are aids to ensure accuracy with the surgery including computerised navigational aids that work with endoscopes and [CT scans](#) [2]. Implantable hearing devices can mean that patients can start to hear where they have been profoundly deaf before surgery.” **Consultant ENT Surgeon, West Midlands.**

How your time is spent

ENT surgeons spend a higher proportion of their time in outpatient clinics and less time in surgery than other surgeons. Patients needing surgery are often seen as day-patients. Surgery is usually [elective](#) [3] and emergency cases are often seen during the day.

You might perform about three operations during an average half-day in theatre, and see between eight and twelve patients in a morning or afternoon outpatients' clinic.

Operations can range from simple procedures that only take 15 minutes, such as grommet insertion to more complex head and neck reconstructive surgery that might last 12 hours. Complex procedures will involve working closely with a range of other specialists.

Any surgical post also involves its share of administrative work – ranging from writing letters to GPs and patients to attendance at departmental and multidisciplinary meetings.

ENT surgeons are also involved with teaching junior colleagues including medical students and often attend national and international conferences.

tional conferences.

[On call](#) [1] and working hours

[On call](#) [1] demand within ENT surgery is not as high as that required in other surgical specialties, making it easier to achieve a good work-life balance.

The EU [Working Time Directive](#) [4] limits the working week to 48 hours. It is also possible to work part-time once you are consultant, or to train on a less than full-time (LTFT) basis (conditions apply). Read more about LTFT [5]

Who you will work with?

Expand / collapse

ENT surgeons work with a wide range of medical and other professional colleagues.

Within the operating theatre you will work with:

- other surgeons such as plastic surgeons [6], maxillofacial surgeons [7] and ophthalmologists [8]
- anaesthetists [9]
- theatre nurses [10]
- medical students
- doctors in training
- operating department practitioners [11]

Outside theatre you will also work with a wide range of people including:

- patients and their families
- healthcare science staff working in audiology [12]
- dietitians [13]
- head and neck physiotherapists [14]
- speech and language therapists [15]
- nurses [16]
- administrative staff [17]
- other doctors and surgeons including plastic surgeons [6], neurosurgeons [18], general surgeons [19] and oral/maxillofacial surgeons [7], oncologists [20], endocrinologists [21], dermatologists [22], radiologists [23] and neurologists [24], paediatricians [25] and ophthalmologists [8]

Once you are a consultant surgeon you will be leading and managing your team.

Attractions and challenges of the role

Expand /

collapse

ENT surgery is a highly rewarding and very varied specialty. ENT surgeons often have the opportunity to greatly improve the quality of life for their patients. For example one of the major developments of ENT has been cochlear implant surgery which enables people who are profoundly deaf to gain a sense of sound and hearing for the first time.

The technology is constantly evolving and it is hoped that in the near future brainstem implants will be effective in treating patients with no functioning auditory nerves, who currently cannot be helped.

ENT surgery is also a technology-driven specialty. The use of robots, lasers and surgical navigation systems will enable the development of further minimally invasive surgical techniques. More complex procedures can now be performed using minimally invasive techniques. Minimally invasive surgery offers many benefits to the patient including more rapid recovery, less risk of infection, better post-operative immune function and enhanced cosmetic results.

There are likely to be more procedures carried out as day surgery in the future.

Some surgery, such as the insertion of grommets results in immediate benefits for the patient. For other conditions the success or otherwise of treatment may not be obvious for some time.

Ear surgery carries risks which can include serious consequences such as total hearing loss in the operated ear, dizziness, [tinnitus](#) [26], facial paralysis or weakness. Modern surgical techniques means that these risks are very low and if the conditions are left untreated the same symptoms may develop anyway.

Dealing with head & neck cancers is a very challenging role. Patients need treatment of cancers in very visible parts of the body which affect senses crucial to normal functioning. Rehabilitation of patients after treatment is particularly rewarding with close cooperation between a wide variety of disciplines leading to very satisfying outcomes for patients.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/surgery/otorhinolaryngology-ear-nose-and-throat-surgery-ent/working-life>

Links

- [1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call
- [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CT_scans
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Elective>
- [4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Working_Time_Directive
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/information-doctors/less-full-time-training-doctors>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery/plastic-surgery>
- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery/oral-and-maxillofacial-surgery>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ophthalmology>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/anaesthesia>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/theatre-nurse>
- [11] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/operating-department-practice/operating-department->

practitioner

[12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physiological-sciences/audiology>

[13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/dietitian>

[14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/physiotherapist>

[15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/speech-and-language-therapist>

[16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>

[17] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/administration>

[18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery/neurosurgery>

[19] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/surgery/general-surgery>

[20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/radiology/clinical-oncology>

[21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/endocrinology-and-diabetes>

[22] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/dermatology>

[23] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/radiology>

[24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/neurology>

[25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/paediatrics/paediatrics>

[26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Tinnitus>