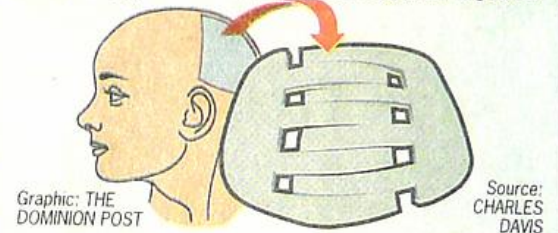




Bearing up: Olivia Mayo, 8, wasn't 'scared out of my head' about the operation to remove part of her skull, but admits she was a little frightened. Picture: ROSS GIBLIN

► SKULL OPERATION

Part of Olivia's skull was removed and cut in half using a zig-zag technique that allows the skull to expand, relieving pressure on the brain. The pieces of bone are attached to the rest of the skull using a titanium plate. The small gaps left behind will eventually grow together.



Graphic: THE DOMINION POST

Source:
CHARLES DAVIS

Pressure's off Olivia

KELLY ANDREW

WELLINGTON surgeons have taken apart the skull of an eight-year-old girl and carefully meshed it back together to relieve pressure on her brain.

Olivia Mayo, of Palmerston North, is now looking forward to a normal life without headaches.

As she cuddles her teddybears Squeak and No-Name, the only signs of what she has been through are the bruises around her eyes and a stapled incision across her head, which is mostly hidden by her hair.

Those long locks are also what disguised Olivia's rare medical condition and, if her parents had not acted on their concerns, it could have caused brain damage.

Olivia had developed sagittal craniosynostosis, where the seam that runs from the front to the back of the skull fuses together and cannot expand. Her growing brain was being squeezed so tightly inside her skull that the pressure left hammer-like indentations on the inside of the bone.

Plastic surgeon Charles Davis and neurosurgeon Agadha Wickremesekera operated on Olivia last Wednesday.

Her parents, Elton and Kirstie Mayo, are relieved to see their daughter smiling.

"You start thinking about the what-ifs, but we're on the right side of it now," Mr Mayo said.

Mrs Mayo had asked a GP about Olivia's headaches and her unusual head shape but was told it was nothing to worry about. Not convinced, she asked for a CT scan at Palmerston North Hospital.

Olivia said she was a little frightened about having an operation. "I wasn't scared out of my head, but I was still a bit scared."

She is now back at home with her family and, apart from having to be careful not to get a knock on the head, she is getting into a normal routine, including returning to school as early as next week.