

Blepharoplasty Patient information leaflet

What is blepharoplasty?

Blepharoplasty is an operation, which removes excess skin (dermatochalasis) from the upper eyelids. This operation can be carried out on the NHS if the excess skin is affecting vision or making the eyelids heavy and difficult to open. It cannot be done on the NHS if it is just a cosmetic problem.

What are the causes of excess upper lid skin?

Excess skin is often due to ageing and sun damage. The eyelid appearance may be typical for your family. Sometimes episodes of swelling of the eyelid due to infection or allergy can stretch the skin.

What does the blepharoplasty operation involve?

Removal of excess upper eyelid skin is carried out as day case surgery, generally under local anaesthesia, the operation takes approximately 30-40 minutes for each eye. Occasionally the surgery is performed under general anaesthetic or sedation. You will lie on a couch in the operating room. Anaesthetic drops will be put in your eyes. Your face will be cleaned with antiseptic solution and sterile drapes will be placed around your face. The surgeon will use a pen to mark out the skin to be removed. Anaesthetic is then injected under the eyelid skin, which feels sharp. After this the eyelid will be numb and the surgery will not hurt. The excess skin is cut away. The skin wounds are then closed with sutures. If dissolvable sutures are used, they will fall out in 4-8 weeks. Otherwise they have to be removed 5-7 days later. At the end of the surgery, ointment is put on the wounds and eye pads applied to the lids. If you have both eyes done then one of the eye pads will be removed after about an hour.

What about consent for the operation?

Before your operation, usually on the day of surgery, you will be asked to sign a consent form, which is signed by both you and the doctor. It is a permanent record to show that your operation and the type of anaesthetic have been discussed with you. When you sign the consent form you are indicating that you want to go ahead with the operation. If you are not happy with anything on the form you should not sign it until you have had your worries discussed and resolved. You can refuse any operation. Remember that you may need to bring your reading glasses into the hospital with you to help you read the form. If your sight is poor you can ask the doctor or a relative to read it to you and check it before you sign.

What happens after the operation?

If possible it is better if the eye pads are left overnight. It helps to reduce bruising. Do not worry if there is some blood on the eye pad when you remove it. Clean the eyelids gently with cotton wool pads soaked in cooled, boiled water. If your eye feels

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sore when the anaesthetic wears off, take simple painkillers like Paracetamol. Avoid aspirin and Ibuprofen.

Normally, the discomfort will settle within a day or two. It is normal for the eyelids to appear swollen and bruised for some time after this operation and there may be a little bleeding from the eyelids for the first day. Most forms of light exercise and a normal work pattern may be resumed within a few days of surgery. Eyelid makeup can be worn from about four weeks after surgery. If you have severe pain and excessive lid swelling please ring the eye Casualty for advice

You should not drive yourself home after the operation, or until advised. Before you leave you will be given eye drops and ointment to use for a week or so after your surgery. Eyelids normally heal very well and the wound is hidden in the natural skin crease of the eye lid.

What problems can occur after the operation?

Bruising and swelling of the eyelids is common but will settle within a few weeks. You may experience dry, gritty eyes which can be relieved by using of lubricant eye drops or ointment. The vision may be slightly blurred for a few days. Very rarely, too much skin is removed and if this causes problems with lid closure, skin will need to be replaced. Sometimes some loose skin persists, often at the outer end of the eyelid and further surgery may be required. Rarely post-operative infection may develop in the lids when they would become tender, red and swollen and the wound may breakdown. If this happens then you should contact the hospital as antibiotic tablets may be needed to help correct this and allow the lids to heal. Extremely rarely, severe bleeding around or behind the eye can cause loss of vision

If you have any queries following your treatment, please contact us on the following telephone numbers:

Eye Emergency 01603 287787.

At all other times please ring 01603 286286 and ask the operator to contact the OPHTHALMIC (EYE) DOCTOR ON-CALL.

