Patient information factsheet

Squint surgery for adults

This leaflet tells you about what will happen once you and your eye doctor decide that a squint operation is the best option for you. You should already have a copy of our general leaflet on squints and squint surgery. Please ask us if you have any questions.

What happens next?

The next step is for your name to be put onto the waiting list for the squint operation. The length of the waiting list varies, and you will be told how long it is likely to be. If you have any questions about the wait for the operation, please contact the Eye Unit Admissions Department, or the Orthoptic Department (numbers below).

The orthoptist may need to see you from time to time, whilst you are on the waiting list, to keep a check on your eyes.

We will send you an appointment for the pre-admission clinic in the Orthoptic Department, usually between two and four weeks before the operation. At this appointment we will discuss the planned operation date with you, the orthoptist will check your eyes, and the doctor will do a brief check on your general health. We will explain the operation to you and answer any questions.

You will also be advised when to arrive on the day of the operation and what to bring with you. The operation is done under a general anaesthetic and so it is very important that you do not eat or drink before the operation and the latest time when you can eat or drink will be explained to you. The doctor will also discuss any medication that you are on, in most cases this should be taken as normal on the day of the operation but this can vary depending on the type of medication and you will be given specific instructions.

What happens on the day of the operation?

- Please make sure that you have not had anything to eat or drink after the times that you have been told.

- You will need to arrange your own transport to and from the hospital. After the operation, we advise that you do not drive yourself and do not take public transport to get home.

- Please report to the Eye Short Stay Unit, Level C, Eye Unit, at the time you have been given. All patients are asked to arrive at the same time, so that the doctor and the anaesthetist can see them before starting operating. This means that there may be a wait before your operation.

- When you arrive, the nurse will show you to the day-patient seating area and explain the plan for the day to you. The eye doctor will answer any questions, confirm your consent to the operation and ask you to sign the consent form. The doctor will make a mark on your forehead with a felt tip pen above the eye(s) that will be operated on. This will wipe off after the operation.
The anaesthetist will check on your health and explain about the anaesthetic.

Shortly before going to the operating theatre the nurse will give you a theatre gown and ask you to change. The nurse will then take you to the anaesthetic room. You can walk or go in a wheelchair whichever you prefer.

You will be given the anaesthetic by an injection into the back of your hand. Squint surgery is done under a general anaesthetic so you will not be aware of anything during the operation. Squint operations usually take about 45 minutes.

What happens after the operation?

After the operation you will be taken to the recovery room to wake up. The nurse will then take you back to the Eye Short Stay Unit where there will be a bed for you to rest until you are ready to go home.

Once you are feeling well you will be offered tea or coffee and biscuits or toast.

If you have had an adjustable operation then once you are awake and feeling well enough the doctor and orthoptist will come to your room to assess your eyes and do the adjustment.

When can I go home?

The nurse will advise you when you are ready to go home. You will need to be feeling well and to be eating and drinking. It is not possible to give an exact time as it depends on the time of the surgery and how you are feeling afterwards. Most people can go home between two and four hours after the operation but occasionally people need to stay in overnight.

You should arrange for someone to collect you after the operation, as it is best not to drive or use public transport straightaway.

We advise that you should have an adult with you for 24 hours after the operation.

Please bring sunglasses or your own glasses to wear on the way home to protect your eyes.

What should I expect after the operation?

Before you leave the nurse will give you a leaflet with detailed information on what to expect after the operation.

The eye(s) will be quite uncomfortable for a few days after the operation. Whilst you are on the ward the nurses will provide medication, if needed, to help with any discomfort. Please make sure that you have some pain relief medication to use if needed after you get home, for example, paracetamol or ibuprofen. Before you leave the hospital, the nurses will advise you when you can next take medication. When using medication to relieve discomfort please follow the instructions, and contact us for advice if in doubt.
You will be given eye drops to use after the operation to help the eye(s) to heal. The nurse on the Eye Short Stay Unit will explain how and when to use the drops.

The white area of the eye(s), where the operation was done, will look red after the operation. This will improve in the first couple of weeks but may take a few months to settle. You may also notice that there is some red discharge from the eye(s) and that the eyelids are sticky on waking for the first few days after the operation. The nurse will explain how to clean your eyelids.

You will need about one week off work/full activities after the squint operation.

Things to avoid after the operation:
  - Sports and strenuous activities - for two weeks
  - Swimming - for four weeks

It is best not to drive for the first few days after the operation. After this you can start driving as soon as you feel safe and confident, provided that you do not have double vision.

You can wash your hair, although it is best not to do this for the first day or two after the operation. Try to avoid getting water or shampoo into the eyes.

Contact lenses should not be used in the operated eye(s), for at least a week after the operation, so please bring your glasses with you to wear home and until the eye(s) have healed.

You will be given an appointment to see the orthoptist and the doctor two weeks after the operation.

If you have any concerns after the operation please contact the Orthoptic Department, the Eye Short Stay Unit, or the Eye Casualty Department.

Useful phone numbers

Orthoptics: 023 8079 4789
(0830 – 1700 Monday to Friday)

Eye Short Stay Unit: 023 8079 6595 or 023 8079 8600
(0730 – 1700 Monday to Friday)

Eye Casualty: 023 8079 6592
(Anytime - 24 hour service)

Eye Unit Admissions Department: 023 8079 8734
(0900 – 1600 Monday to Friday)

For a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8079 4688.

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