

Patient information factsheet

Xanthelasma

What are xanthelasma?

Xanthelasma (pronounced *zan-the-laz-ma*) are fatty lumps that tend to form near the inner corners of the upper and lower eyelids. In about half the cases they are due to high cholesterol levels in the blood in which case diet or cholesterol lowering drugs may be advised. The fat deposits are completely harmless and if you are not bothered by them then surgery is not necessary.

Occasionally wide areas of skin are affected so that it is not possible to remove the xanthelasma completely since this would cause distortion of the lid. In this case the surgeon would take as much as is safely possible.

The xanthelasma can recur and surgery will not prevent recurrence.

What surgery is required for a xanthelasma?

Drops are put in your eyes to numb them. The eyelids are cleaned with an iodine-containing antiseptic solution. Local anaesthetic is injected into the area of the lid with the xanthelasma which stings for 10-20 seconds. After this the lid is numb. The xanthelasma can then be cut out and the skin is closed with small absorbable sutures. The stitches will dissolve and fall out over the next few weeks.

At the end of the operation antibiotic ointment and an eye pad are put on your eye.

You will be given the ointment to take home to apply to the lid wounds together with written instructions.

What happens after the operation?

After the operation you can take the eye pad off after about 4 hours. If both eyelids have been operated on then at least one eye pad will be removed after an hour. You may find some blood and discharge in and around your eye. This is quite normal and can be removed by washing gently with cool boiled water. Once the anaesthetic solution has worn off you may have a little discomfort for a day or so. You can take paracetamol tablets if necessary. The eyelid may look bruised and swollen for a few weeks after the operation. You should not drive home after the operation so please come to hospital by public transport or arrange for someone to drive you home.

When you get home you should rest quietly for a while. You may work normally the next day.

Will I sign a consent form?

You will be asked to sign a consent form before the operation. The doctor will also sign it. The consent form is a permanent record to show that the operation and the type of anaesthetic to be given have been discussed with you. You will be given a copy of the form.

When you sign the consent form you are indicating that you wish the operation to go ahead. 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 an operation. Remember that you may need to bring your reading glasses to hospital to help you to read the form.

What problems can occur after the operation?

Your eyelid may be bruised and swollen and a little sore for a few days. Usually the lid heals well with little obvious scarring. However, sometimes scars can persist in some patients. It may be possible to correct unsightly scarring with further surgery.

Occasionally wounds become infected and can then breakdown. If this happens you should contact the hospital as antibiotic tablets would be required. Once the infection has settled down it may be necessary to restitch the wound.

Bleeding after the operation is usually slight and stops within a short time. If bleeding continues you should contact the hospital in case further treatment is required.

You will have a follow up appointment arranged for after your operation. It is important to keep this appointment.

If you have any problems before this please phone:

Eye short stay unit: **023 8120 6595 or 023 8120 8600**
(7.30am to 7pm, Monday to Friday)

Eye Casualty: **023 8120 6592**
(Anytime - 24 hour service)

For a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688.