

Patient information factsheet

Blepharoplasty

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 and 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 most often due to ageing changes. The eyelid appearance may be typical for your family. Chronic exposure to sunlight and cigarette smoking can worsen these changes. 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. Occasionally the surgery is performed under local anaesthetic with 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 iodine solution and sterile drapes will be placed around your face. The surgeon will use a pen to mark out the skin to be removed. The ink will wash off later. Anaesthetic is then injected under the eyelid skin, which feels sharp and stings for about ten seconds. 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 absorbable sutures, which will dissolve and fall out over the next few weeks. Eyelids normally heal very well and the wound is hidden in the natural skin crease of the lid.

At the end of the operation the antiseptic is washed off, ointment is put on the wounds and eye pads applied to the lids. One or both of the eye pads will be removed after about an hour.

What happens after the operation?

After the surgery the eye pads are left on for an hour or so to help reduce bruising. Do not worry if there is some blood on the eye pad when it is removed.

If your eye feels sore when the anaesthetic wears off, take simple painkillers like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. Normally, the discomfort will settle within a day or two.

You should not drive yourself home after the operation. Before you leave the hospital you will be given drops and ointment to use for a week or so after the surgery.

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 wounds in the eyelids for a short time. The eyelids should be cleaned gently with tissues soaked in cooled, boiled water.

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 three weeks after surgery.

If you have severe pain, not relieved by simple painkillers, please ring the eye short stay unit or Eye Casualty for advice (see below).

What problems can occur after the operation?

- Bruising and swelling of the eyelids is common. The surface of the eyeball may also swell (chemosis). These changes will settle after a few weeks.
- Dry, gritty eyes for a few weeks can be helped with lubricant eye drops and ointment. The vision may be slightly blurred for a few days.
- A post-operative infection may develop in the lids - they would become tender, red and swollen and the wound may break down. If this happens then you should contact the hospital since antibiotic tablets may be needed to help correct this and allow the lids to heal. It might be necessary to restitch the wound once the infection has settled.
- 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.
- Extremely rarely, severe bleeding around or behind an eye can cause permanent loss of vision.
- 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 if it still causing a visual problem.
- Unsightly scarring, persistent eyelid swelling or other unusual skin changes are extremely rare complications

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 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.

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

Eye short stay unit:	023 8120 6595 or 023 8120 8600 (7.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
Eye Casualty:	023 8120 6592 (Anytime - 24 hours, all days of the week)

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