

Upper Blepharoplasty

Patient Information

Background

As we age, eyelid skin frequently becomes a concern, prompting people to consider treatment to relieve heaviness and alleviate a tired appearance. To understand why these changes develop, we need to have an understanding of the anatomy of the eyelid area and how the ageing process affects this. The prime role of the eyelids is to protect the eye to ensure that the cornea remains hydrated and provides a physical barrier to injury. As we age, the brow falls a little, allowing more skin to sit in the upper eyelid. This increases the overhanging skin fold and may give a sensation of heaviness. The quality of the skin changes, also leading to crepey texture within the eyelid and this increased fold often looks messy and can lose its sharpness. Fat may be apparent in the corners of the upper eyelid. Fat that is naturally present around the eye is kept in place by a structure called the orbital septum. As we age, the orbital septum becomes lax, allowing the fat to prolapse forwards. This prolapse forwards gives the characteristic puffiness that commonly occurs with advancing age. In assessing the eyelids, we need therefore to assess the following:

- Brow position
- Skin excess and quality
- Muscle action
- Fat prolapse
- Natural lid tone

What is upper blepharoplasty?

Upper blepharoplasty is a surgical procedure carried out to remove the folds of loose skin which sit over the upper eyelids.

What are the expected results of the surgery?

Upper eyelid surgery is often performed to 'open' the eye and define the shape and contour of the upper eye area. It should not be obvious that you have had surgery but you should look more rested and youthful.

Is the procedure right for me?

A detailed consultation with your consultant plastic surgeon is essential prior to undergoing any surgical procedure. During the consultation, your surgeon will discuss your area/s of concern, desired improvements, options available (including no treatment at all) and expected outcomes. Your surgeon will examine your face and eye area and may take some photographs for your medical records. You will be given a 'cooling-off' period of at least 2 weeks between initial

consultation and the date of your operation to ensure you have ample time to reflect on all aspects of the procedure before proceeding (although please bear in mind the waiting lists for our Surgeons mean this period is invariably significantly longer).

How is the procedure carried out?

Should upper eyelid blepharoplasty be agreed upon as the most suitable treatment, the procedure will be carried out by your surgeon in our state-of-the-art operating theatre. Following cleaning of the eyelids, the skin is carefully marked and local anaesthetic gently given. The procedure commonly takes around 120 minutes to perform and after the anaesthetic is given, it is entirely pain free. Skin is removed along with a small strip of redundant muscle. If necessary, fat can also be re-contoured. The wound edges are carefully closed, and fine steristrip dressings applied.

Aftercare and recovery

After surgery it is imperative that you rest to allow the area to settle. You should take it as easy as possible for the first 2 days post-surgery, remembering that the less you do, the less you will bruise. Try not to bend over or strain and avoid exercise altogether for these first few days. This ensures that your blood pressure remains stable, reducing the chances of bleeding and subsequent swelling and bruising. As a general rule of thumb, avoid doing anything that would make your face redden during this initial stage of healing. This may range from avoiding hot baths to ensuring you do not exert yourself through lifting, for example. Patients generally experience minimum discomfort after this procedure and healing usually progresses quickly. After surgery the area will bruise a little reaching a maximum after 48 hours, gradually settling over subsequent weeks. Any bruising that occurs on the lower eyelid may be covered up with concealer. The very fine stitch is easily removed after a week, at which point the eyelids will appear swollen and crepey for a few days. We advise you start gently massaging the incision line with a light eye cream to help soften the scar and speed up the healing process 10 days after surgery. This should be applied with the ring finger, gently working outwards from the nose towards the ear. It is perfectly normal to experience some mild swelling and sometimes, red bumps on each corner of the eye nearest the nose, that will again settle as the weeks pass. Normally, you will need a week off work and will need to avoid vigorous exercise for around six weeks whilst deeper level healing takes place.

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Showering is permitted on the second post-operative day. Scars tend to be quite red initially, turning to purple and then fading to white. Most patients will form good quality scars over time.

What to expect after surgery

The surgery is usually performed as a day case under a local anaesthesia. Our highly experienced medical team will be on hand during your stay to care for your needs. The operation usually takes around two hours to complete. If your surgery is performed as a day case and you go home on the same day. Your eye area will feel tight and sore. Simple painkillers should be enough to keep you comfortable.

Risks and Complications

All surgical procedures are associated with risks. Your Surgeon will explain these in detail during initial consultation, enabling you to reach an informed decision on whether you wish to proceed. Serious complications are uncommon, however patients should be aware of the following complications prior to undergoing upper blepharoplasty surgery-

- Anaesthesia risks including allergic reaction, blood clots, heart attack, stroke and death
- Infection
- Healing problems
- Extrusion of deep stitches
- Loss of blood supply to skin
- Change of the colour of skin
- Bleeding, swelling and bruising
- Asymmetry
- Poor scarring of skin
- Increased or reduced sensation
- Damage to deeper structures
- Unsatisfactory results
- Pain, which may persist
- Change over time
- Allergic reaction
- Possibility of revisional surgery

Results

Upper blepharoplasty does not lift the eyebrow, it is a technique to reduce excess eyelid skin. Some residual skin in the eye fold is to be expected after blepharoplasty, if there is no fold the eyelid wouldn't be able to close and may look unusual, it is important to realise that the skin fold can be reduced but not eliminated.

Alternative treatments

Upper blepharoplasty surgery is the most effective way of removing the loose folds of skin that sit over the upper eyelid. It will not, however, lift the eyebrow. Some people will get lifting of the brow with the careful use of Botulinum Toxin to rebalance muscles. Specific surgical brow lifting procedures are available however they are indicated in relatively few situations. Non-surgical ultrasound (Ultherapy), radio-frequency (Exilis Elite) or microcurrent (CACI) based treatments may offer some degree of subtle benefit.

If you experience any problems or have concerns following surgery, please do not hesitate to call our direct patient line for assistance on 07908 891059.

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Patient Pre & Post-Operative Care Guide

Pre-Operative Preparations

2 weeks before surgery-

We would recommend that you start taking Arnica anti-bruising tablets, three times a day, two weeks prior to and two weeks after surgery. These are available from several health and wellbeing stores, including Holland & Barratt.

1 week before surgery-

Avoid Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Nurofen and other similar painkillers one week before and two weeks after surgery. Paracetamol is the safest painkiller to take, if necessary.

Stop taking Vitamin E and its compounds (such as evening primrose oil, fish oils, garlic and garlic capsules) 1 week before surgery and 2 weeks after surgery. Taking Vitamin E in any form can cause bleeding and post-operative complications.

Day of surgery-

You must take your routine medicines at the usual time, unless advised otherwise and bring them with you (including inhalers).

Remove lenses prior to arrival at the clinic.

You will be discharged from the clinic with steristrips in place on your eyelids. If you think that you may feel self-conscious about this, we recommend that you bring sunglasses.

Post-Operative Instructions

Average length of stay-

The surgery will be performed as a day case under a local anaesthetic unless your Surgeon advised otherwise during consultation. **Patients should not drive for a minimum of 24 hours post-operatively, so alternative means of transport should be arranged.**

0-2 weeks after surgery

- It is essential to ensure activity is kept to a minimum and to rest as much as possible. The less you do, the less you will bruise
- Shower if you wish and feel free to wash your hair, but please keep the steristrips as dry as possible
- Keep your head up to reduce swelling and sleep with extra pillows to raise your head
- To minimise bruising, avoid bending down, hot baths, heavy lifting and anything else that would naturally cause your face to redden
- Paracetamol can be taken as required

2 days after surgery onwards

- Gentle walks are permitted
- Driving may resume

10 days after surgery onwards

- Once sutures have been removed, use of a light, eye-specific moisturiser is recommended. Use a small amount, applied with the ring finger over the top and lower lids, working from the nose aspect to the ear
- Mascara can be worn

3 weeks after surgery onwards

- Moderate cardiovascular exercise may resume but do listen to your body- it will tell you if you are overdoing things. Deeper level healing will continue for several weeks and overdoing thing may lead to secondary bruising
- Eye makeup can be worn

6 weeks after surgery onwards

- Eyelash and eyebrow treatments are permitted

6-12 weeks after surgery onwards

- Swimming and more strenuous exercise may resume, as advised by your surgeon at your follow up appointment

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