

Ophthalmology department

Blepharoplasty

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to give you information about blepharoplasty surgical procedure. We hope it answers some of the questions which you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team. It aims to help you understand more. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us. Use the details provided at the end of this leaflet.

What is blepharoplasty?

Blepharoplasty is also known as eyelid surgery. It is a procedure to improve the appearance or function of the eyelids, or both. It can be performed on the upper or lower eyelids, or both. This surgery is often used to remove excess skin, fat, or muscle, which may:

- impair vision (functional blepharoplasty)
- create a tired or aged appearance (cosmetic blepharoplasty)
- please note that lower eyelid blepharoplasty is usually not available in the NHS. Your surgeon needs to demonstrate that the heaviness of the eyelids is causing obstruction of your vision for the eyelid surgery to be eligible for NHS treatment

Why might I need a blepharoplasty?

As we age, the skin loses elasticity, and muscles weaken. This can result in:

- folds of skin on the upper eyelids that may obstruct vision
- puffiness or 'bags' under the eyes caused by fat protrusion
- wrinkling or sagging skin around the eyes

Some people seek surgery for cosmetic reasons, while others may have functional concerns affecting their quality of life.

What happens during the procedure?

Blepharoplasty is usually performed under local anaesthetic. There may also be sedation or a general anaesthetic. The surgery typically lasts 1 to 2 hours, depending on whether both upper and lower eyelids are treated.

Upper eyelid surgery is usually carried out under local anaesthetic. Your surgeons will want to check during surgery that the eyelid height and shape match up with each other. To do this they will often ask you to open and close your eyes during the surgery. They can then make any necessary adjustments.

- **upper eyelid surgery** – the surgeon makes a cut (incision) along the natural eyelid crease. They remove excess skin, fat, and possibly a strip of muscle. They close the cut with fine stitches
- **browpexy** – often the sagging of the eyebrows contributes to the heaviness of the eyelids. Your surgeon may carry out a procedure to elevate the eyebrows at the same time
- **ptosis surgery** – sometimes the levator muscle that opens the eyelid may actually be detached, causing a droop in the eyelids. This can be corrected at the same time as the blepharoplasty surgery
- **lower eyelid surgery** – a cut (incision) is made just below the lashes or inside the lower eyelid. Fat deposits are removed or redistributed, and the skin is tightened before closing the cut

Your surgeon will explain the specific details of your operation during your consultation.

Potential benefits of surgery

- **improved vision:** for patients whose upper eyelids obstruct their line of sight
- **rejuvenated appearance:** a more youthful and rested look
- **long-lasting results:** while the aging process continues, results often last many years

Risks and complications

Like all surgical procedures, blepharoplasty carries risks, including:

- swelling, bruising, or discomfort (common and temporary)
- dry or irritated eyes
- scarring (usually minimal and fades over time)
- asymmetry or difficulty closing the eyelids
- rarely, infection, bleeding, or changes in vision (including double vision)

Your surgeon will discuss these risks with you and answer any questions.

Preparing for your surgery

To ensure the best possible outcome:

- **smoking:** stop smoking at least six weeks before surgery to reduce the risk of complications
- **medications:** inform your surgeon of all medications and supplements you take. You may need to stop certain blood-thinning medications temporarily
- **health check:** notify your surgeon of any medical conditions, especially thyroid disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, or eye disorders (for example, glaucoma)
- **day of surgery:** have a light meal before your procedure if under local anaesthetic, or fast as instructed if under general anaesthetic. Arrange for someone to drive you home.

Please note that often there will be more than one surgeon operating. This speeds up the surgery and both eyes are often bandaged for a few hours after surgery. One or both bandages will be removed to enable you to go home.

Aftercare and recovery

- **rest and recovery:** keep your head elevated for several days and apply cold compresses to reduce swelling. Most patients return to light activities within 1 to 2 weeks
- **wound care:** clean the incision site as directed. Avoid applying makeup until cleared by your healthcare team
- **physical activities:** avoid strenuous exercise, swimming, and bending over for at least 2 weeks
- **follow-up:** attend all scheduled post-operative appointments to monitor your healing

If you experience severe pain, sudden vision changes, or signs of infection (for example, fever, redness, or discharge), contact your healthcare team immediately.

Frequently asked questions

1. **Will the results look natural?** Your surgeon will aim to achieve results that complement your natural features. They will discuss realistic expectations during your consultation.
2. **Will I have visible scars?** Scars are usually hidden within natural eyelid folds and fade significantly over time.
3. **How long do results last?** The effects of blepharoplasty can last many years, but natural aging will continue.
4. **When can I wear contact lenses?** Contact lenses can typically be worn after 2 to 3 weeks, once swelling has subsided.

Who can I contact for more information?

- Emergency Department at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3247
- Outpatients at Western Eye Hospital – 020 3312 3236
- Alex Cross Ward. Day care unit – 020 3312 3218/ 9614
- Outpatients at Charing Cross Hospital – 020 3311 1109/ 1233/ 0137

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service, and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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Published: February 2025
Review date: February 2028
Reference no: 5170
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