
Instructions following eyelid surgery

After discharge from hospital

You should have someone with you for the first night after surgery. You should not drive or operate any machinery or do anything that requires careful decision making as your vision will not be normal (especially if one eye is covered) and you will often have been given sedatives at the time of the surgery.

If your eye has a **dressing**, leave this untouched until the time you have been told to remove it (usually the next day), or in some cases (usually when a skin graft has been performed) leave it until you see the doctor at 5 to 6 days after surgery, when he will remove it.

You may apply **ice packs** during the first 24-48 hours to help reduce swelling and bruising. Crushed ice wrapped up in a clean face cloth works well, as does a packet of frozen peas in a clean cloth. Some pharmacies provide specially shaped and moulded ice packs designed for use after eyelid surgery that can be refrozen and reused.

For any **pain**, take Paracetamol (e.g. Panadol) or Panadeine (Paracetamol and codeine). Avoid aspirin. You are unlikely to need anything stronger than this. If pain is excessive and not relieved by these painkillers, contact the hospital.

Some **bleeding** onto the dressing is common. If it soaks through the dressing and runs onto the face, contact the hospital.

Removing the Dressing

For many, but not all eyelid operations, the dressing is removed the day after surgery. If you have been a day-patient, remove the dressing at home on the morning after surgery. It is normal for there to be a discharge of some blood and sticky mucus on the eye and on the dressing. After washing your hands, carefully clean this off the eye using sterile saline (available from a pharmacy) or water that has been boiled and allowed to cool, and wiping gently from the inner corner to the outer using moistened cotton wool balls.

Applying Ointment

Apply ointment (usually Chlorsig, antibiotic ointment) to the sutures (stitches) three times a day, or as otherwise instructed. The ointment will often seep into the eye from the eyelid and blur your vision a little. This is normal. If you are prescribed other medication such as drops, follow the instructions provided.

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Swelling and Bruising

It is normal for the area that has been operated on to be swollen and bruised. The amount of bruising and swelling varies from person to person, but usually increases over the first 2 or 3 days, and may spread down the face, and then gradually diminishes. Swelling is often worse first thing in the morning, and lessens during the day

Discharge from the eye

Some discharge from the eye is common. It should be carefully cleaned off before applying any ointment. It is often greatest after a night's sleep.

Bleeding from the eye in the first 10 days

Sometimes, the wound may bleed some days after surgery. If this happens, clean the eye, fold several tissues up, close the eye and hold the tissues firmly over the area that is bleeding (or the whole eye if you are not sure) for 10 minutes. Repeat a second time if this does not help, and if the eye is still bleeding contact the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital on 9929 8666 and ask for the Emergency Department.

Removal of stitches

If your stitches need to be removed this will generally be done at your first post-operative appointment. Absorbable (dissolving) stitches may take some time to fall off. If they are still present after a week, moistening them regularly will hasten their falling off.

Showering and hair washing after surgery

If there is a dressing to be left for several days, you may wash your hair over a basin, but keep the dressing dry. It is safe to shower and wash your hair after the dressing is removed provided that you apply plenty of ointment to the wounds and stitches before showering. Try to avoid excess water and soap/shampoo directly on or around the operation site for at least ten days.

Activity after surgery

Light exercise (e.g. walking) is fine. You should avoid heavy lifting, straining or strenuous exercise for the first week. Reading, television or using a computer is fine, but if the eye or eyes feel sore, scratchy, or irritable, take regular breaks, and use simple lubricating drops (artificial tears) as often as needed to keep the eye comfortable.