



## Surgical Experience & Post-operative Instructions for Eyelid Surgery

### **Prior to Surgery**

Please remember if you are on any of the listed blood thinners, aspirin, Plavix and coumadin being the most common, they need to be stopped prior to surgery unless discussed with your surgeon. You should stop your aspirin 2 weeks in advance, Plavix 1 week in advance, and coumadin 3 days in advance. It is extremely important that you **do not eat or drink anything** prior to surgery – this includes coffee, tea, and toast. You will not be able to have your surgery if you eat or drink. Please **do not wear any makeup** the day of surgery. If your health changes prior to surgery please speak with your doctor to see if you need to postpone.

### **The Eyelid Procedure**

Most eyelid procedures are completed under local anesthesia, with or without mild sedation. They are typically performed in an out-patient facility or in the office. The procedure is typically painless, although you may have occasional mild discomfort during the procedure. The entire procedure may take from one to three hours, depending largely on whether all four lids are being operated on, or just the upper or lower ones.

Most surgical procedures of the eyelid are completed through eyelid crease incisions using either laser, radiocautery, or a scalpel. Incisions in either location will extend into the "crow's feet" region. Incisions placed in these locations allow for the best cosmetic results. It should be noted that while significant scar formation and infection are uncommon in the eyelid, they are both possible post-operative complications. The wounds are closed with either tiny sutures that may dissolve on their own, or skin glue.

If the surgeon is correcting upper eyelid drooping, he will carefully advance and tighten the levator muscle, which elevates the upper eyelid. The eyelid is carefully compared to the opposite eye in terms of lid height in awake patients; however, this is not possible in patients under general anesthesia.

If the lower eyelids are being operated on, some surgeons elect to proceed with a transconjunctival blepharoplasty when excess skin does not need to be removed. This procedure entails a small incision only on the inside of the lower eyelid. This allows the removal of a fat pocket in the lower eyelid and prevents any visible scar, while still producing the desired result. However, if there is an excess of loose skin, then an external incision will be necessary.

If the eyebrows are being operated on the same incisions will be used, and the surgeon will dissect up under the eyebrow. Permanent sutures or dissolvable implant devices will be placed just above and under the brow for fixation. Patients routinely notice moderate discomfort and swelling in this location following surgery.

For lid tightening procedures you will have a small incision in the outer corner or "crow's feet" region of your eye. The surgeon will shorten the horizontal length of your upper or lower eyelid in an effort to prevent it from turning in or out, or allowing the tears to fall over the edge.

The surgeon will attempt to make both eyes look similar through direct comparison. Despite this comparison there are a number of things that can affect your eyelid position, including swelling, bruising, the amount of local anesthetic used, patient effort and cooperation, and unpredictable differences in healing between the two

sides. Because of this, post-operative adjustments are needed in roughly 10% of patients. These are usually done in the office. Please understand the reality of surgery: it is impossible to obtain or guarantee perfect symmetry between the two sides though we make every effort to achieve as good a result as possible.

### **Recovery from Surgery**

You will likely be allowed to leave the surgical facility shortly after surgery in the care of a responsible adult. If you have surgery on one eye only you will have a pressure bandage placed. Often the bandage can be removed the following day. You should plan to apply cold packs to your operated eyelids for the first 48 hours after surgery to help control swelling as described below. You should expect swelling and some bruising, and this may vary greatly from one individual to another. If your surgery is limited to your upper lids, don't be alarmed with swelling and bruising in your lower lids – gravity will pull blood and fluid from your upper lids down into your lower lids and even your cheeks. If you have been on a blood thinner medication, such as aspirin or Coumadin, you are likely to have more bruising. Most of the bruising resolves over the first 2 weeks. Swelling should begin to decrease after the first few days, look reasonably good after 2-3 weeks but may not resolve entirely for up to 4-6 months after surgery.

Your incision will look red and crusty at first. It is normal for you to experience a small amount of bleeding at the edges of the incision over the first few days. If it is more than a small amount, apply constant pressure for 10 minutes. If this does not stop the bleeding call your doctor.

Your eyes may feel tight and sore, especially the first week after surgery. You may require oral pain medications for the first few days as well, though usually Tylenol alone will suffice. In some cases, the eyes may become dry and somewhat irritated. In this case, it is probably best to apply non-preserved lubricating tears or lubricating ophthalmic ointment. The stitches may itch as they dry out so additional ointment may be applied if this occurs. If your swelling is quite significant, your vision may be blurred or, occasionally, even double. This will resolve once the swelling subsides. On rare occasion changes in the lid may cause a permanent change in your eyeglass prescription. This cannot be predicted and is absolutely unavoidable.

You may shower/bathe the day after surgery. The wounds will not be fully secure for 2 weeks, thus you need to be very gentle. Do not clean the incisions; simply allow the soap and water to run down your face. Then lightly pat the lids dry.

Occasionally sutures will break and the wound may begin to open like a zipper. This is often accompanied with increased swelling and bleeding. If this happens, call your doctor, he will replace your stitches.

### **Your New Appearance**

After the first couple of weeks, you will begin to see the functional and aesthetic results of your surgery. However, you won't have your best results for up to 6 months following surgery. During this period, the incision lines will fade from red to nearly invisible thin white lines. In most cases, you may begin to wear makeup on the eyelids 2 weeks after your surgery.

The results are often dramatic and are likely to restore a more youthful appearance to your face. You may also enjoy improved peripheral vision. In most cases, the results last for many years or even a lifetime.