

Orthoptics

Squint surgery for Adults

You have been referred for squint surgery. This leaflet aims to answer the most frequently asked questions.

What is a squint?

A squint is where the eyes are not looking in the same direction and are out of alignment with each other. The squint can be there all the time or just some of the time, such as when eyes are tired. An eye may turn in (convergent squint) or out (divergent squint) or one eye can be higher or lower than the other (vertical squint). A squint might be in one eye or swap between the two eyes.

In some cases a squint may be associated with double vision.

What is the aim of squint surgery?

- In most cases, the aim of surgery is to move the eyes into a straighter position, making the squint less obvious and improving the appearance
- In some cases, surgery also aims to eliminate, reduce or move the field of double vision
- It may allow the eyes to work together better and in some it may reduce a compensatory head posture (where you have tilted or turned your head to prevent double vision or discomfort)
- Squint surgery does not restore vision to a lazy eye;
- In most cases, any glasses being worn will continue to be needed after the operation.



Patient Information

What does the surgery involve?

Squint surgery involves moving the eye muscles from their original position on the surface of the eye to a new position, to strengthen or weaken the action of a particular muscle, as needed. The amount of surgery is determined for each case individually.

The eye is never removed from its socket during surgery.

What are the risks associated with squint surgery?

- Squint surgery places the eyes in a more acceptable position, in the majority of cases. It is not an exact science and a complete correction of the squint cannot be guaranteed.
- Known risks include under correction or over correction of squint, infection, bleeding, scarring, double vision, further surgery needed and very rarely loss of vision in the operated eye.
- Double vision may occur as the brain adjusts to the new position of the eyes. This often settles over days to weeks. All operated eyes will move after the surgery, usually back into the direction they were in originally. For this reason we may over correct the squint and this may result in short term double vision.
- Scarring is noticeable over the white part of the eye. This usually settles but it is important to use the eye drops prescribed after the operation to reduce the chance of scarring.
- Change in eyelid position is an uncommon complication, but occasionally lid surgery is needed to correct the problem
- Although problems are rare, there are risks associated with general anaesthetic. If you have any concerns please ask to discuss them with the anaesthetist prior to surgery.

Rare but serious risks:

- Swelling of the coat of the eye (scleritis)
- Lost or slipped muscle. 0.09% or 1 patient per 1100. Rarely, one of the eye muscles might slip back from its new position during the operation or shortly afterwards. If this happens further surgery may be needed to correct this
- Needle penetration. 0.1% or 1 patient per 1000. Antibiotic treatment is usually prescribed
- Loss of vision is rare but can result from a detached retina or infection in the eye: 0.05% or 1 patient per 2000

Patient Information

What happens on the day of the operation?

- Squint surgery is usually performed as a day case, under general anaesthesia
- Please make sure you have received instructions about food and drink, and arrival time.
- The operation takes from 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on how many muscles need moving. The operation is performed using very fine instruments and tiny stitches (sutures)
- With adjustable squint surgery you will be taken back into the operating theatre at the end of the morning. Drops will be put into your eyes to numb it;
- The Orthoptist will measure your squint and it will be adjusted accordingly by relaxing or tightening the stitches, or just tying them off.
- Please make sure you bring your glasses as they will be needed for the adjustment
- The number of adjustments required varies greatly between patients. You will be informed before the procedure of what to expect;
- To aid comfort an eye pad may be used to cover the eye for up to 24 hours after surgery.

Following surgery

- The majority of patients go home the same day
- Your eye(s) will be bloodshot and will feel sore and gritty, but simple painkillers like paracetamol usually help ease the discomfort
- You are advised to rest and not exert yourself
- You can lift light weight and bend over
- The redness will slowly reduce over the next few weeks
- You will be given drops to put in your eyes, with full instructions on discharge
- The stitches slowly dissolve and do not need removing
- The squint may be under or over corrected
- As there is a limit to the amount of surgery that can be completed in one go, more than one operation may be needed to achieve a good result
- Other more individual problems which may influence the outcome of squint surgery will be discussed with you in more detail.

Patient Information

- You will be given a follow up appointment in 1-2 weeks after surgery to review the results

What happens after the operation?

- Take things easy for a few days and slowly build up to normal activity over the following four to six weeks;
- Use your drops as advised
- Use cooled boiled water and cotton wool to clean any stickiness from the eyes
- Moderate the time that you spend watching television or reading.
- Wear your glasses as previously advised
- Contact the Eye Department if your vision suddenly gets worse or if there is increased pain or discharge around the eye

Things to avoid during the first 4 weeks after the operation:

- Strenuous exercise
- Swimming
- Smoke, dust or fumes
- Eye make-up
- Avoid rubbing or applying any pressure to the eye
- Contact lenses should not be worn while the eye is red. This may be up to 8 weeks after surgery but varies from person to person
- If you experience double vision after surgery please do not drive or operate machinery.

Wash your hair with your head tilted backwards, if possible, to avoid shampoo entering your eyes.

When can I return to work?

You may return to non-strenuous work after your first post-operative visit, which is usually 1-2 weeks after surgery. If you work in a very dusty environment you may be advised to remain off work for longer.

Patient Information

When can I resume driving?

Unless you have double vision most people can resume driving within a few days of squint surgery, or whenever they feel ready.

Further Information

If you have any more questions about your surgery or aftercare, please discuss the matter with a member of the Eye Department staff: Tel 024 7696 6521

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6521 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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Document History

Department:	Orthoptics
Contact:	26521
Updated:	July 2021
Review:	July 2023
Version:	6.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/287/06