University Hospitals of Leicester
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Having surgery to treat a droopy upper eyelid (ptosis)

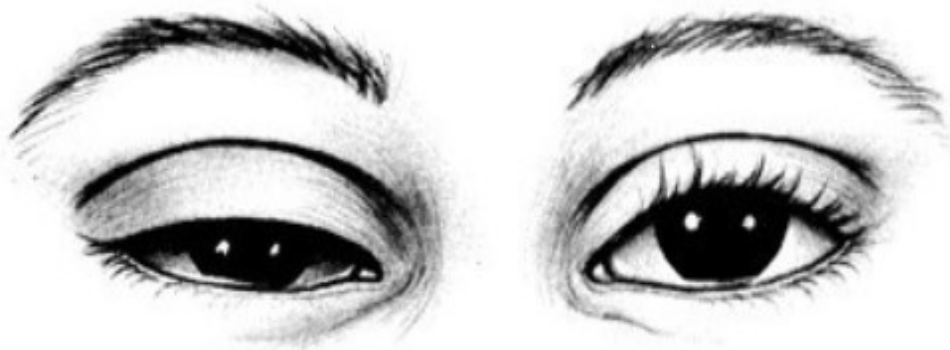
Ophthalmology department

Information for Patients

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What is ptosis?

Ptosis is the name used to describe the drooping of the upper eyelid. This can happen in one or both eyes. (It is not the same as overhanging upper eyelid skin, although these conditions sometimes occur together).



What are the symptoms?

A drooping upper eyelid (ptosis) may affect your appearance but it can also affect your vision if it covers the upper part of your eye. A few people may get eyebrow ache, eye strain or tiredness, especially towards the end of the day.

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What causes ptosis?

Ptosis can be present at birth (congenital) or appear later in life. It can be happen because of:

- injury
- infection or inflammation
- long-term contact lens use
- problems with nerves or muscles due to aging or injury
- an underlying nerve or muscle problem

What is the treatment for ptosis?

- If the drooping of the lid (ptosis) is mild, it does not need treatment.
- If it is more severe, surgery may help. Your surgeon will tell you if an operation is advisable in your case. Ptosis surgery may not be recommended in some eye conditions.
- In cases where people cannot have, or do not want, surgery, a ptosis prop may be offered. This is a simple thin plastic arm which attaches to a pair of glasses. When the glasses are put on it gently pushes the eyelid upwards and can work well at keeping the eyelid out of the vision.

What is the aim of ptosis surgery?

Ptosis surgery aims to:

- restore the normal appearance of the eyelid
- increase the field of vision by lifting the eyelid up
- making it look similar to the other eyelid

What does ptosis surgery involve?

- A cut is made through the skin of the top eyelid. We will shorten the tendons or muscles. This raises the eyelid.
- Sometimes the surgery is done through the underside of the top eyelid.
- In some people the muscles are too weak to lift the lid. Instead a thread of artificial material is passed under the skin to attach the eyelid to the stronger muscles of the forehead. This is called a brow suspension operation.

- Your surgeon will talk to you about the type of operation that is best for you. It will depend on:
  - the cause for the drooping eyelid
  - the general health of the eye.

What type of anesthetic will be used?

In adults, surgery is usually done with a local anesthetic (freezing the eyelid while you are awake). This will let us adjust the eyelid position during the operation. You may even be asked to sit up during the procedure so that the height of the eyelid can be checked. However, local anesthetic with sedation, or general anesthetic can also be used.

In children, ptosis surgery is usually done while they are asleep under a general anesthetic.

What happens after the operation?

- Ptosis operations are usually done as a day case. You will be able to go home after the surgery. You will usually need about 1 or 2 weeks off work.
- You cannot drive for few days after the surgery, until the swelling has settled enough to be out of your vision.
- You may need to wear a pad over your eye after the operation. You can take this off the next morning.
- You may have some bruising and swelling. This may last for a few weeks. You can use ice packs regularly for the first 2 or 3 days to help to reduce swelling.
- Sleeping sitting up a little (at a 45 degree angle). Do not sleep on the side that was operated on.
- Pain is usually fairly mild after a ptosis operation. Simple painkillers such as paracetamol will usually control it.
- You will have stitches in the eyelid. These will usually be dissolving (absorbable). They can be gently rubbed out with a facecloth after 2 or 3 weeks.
- Try to keep the area operated on dry for the first 5 days. You can have a shower and gently pat the lid dry afterwards.
- Do not swim or wear eye make up for about 2 weeks.

- Do not wear contact lenses for the first 6 weeks. They may increase the risk of the lid drooping again if you carry on wearing them. Please ask the eye specialist if this applies to you.
- We will give you eye drops and ointment to use.
- A clinic appointment will be made for a check-up.

What are the risks of ptosis surgery?

There is no guarantee of success with any operation and ptosis surgery is no different. The following are possible complications of ptosis surgery:

- Bruising and swelling of the eyelids (common).
- Scarring (usually hidden in the skin fold of the eyelid).
- Over-correction (eyelid too high) or under-correction (eyelid still too low). These may need more surgery (around 7% in our hospital).
- Poor contour of the upper lid or uneven eyelids.
- Dry eye symptoms get worse as the eye is wider open. If you use artificial tear drops, you may need to use them more often.
- The eyelid may not close fully. Your eye may be slightly open at night. There may be a risk of the front surface of the eye becoming dry. This will need treatment with tear supplements and ointments until things settle.
- Wound infection which will need treatment with antibiotics.

Very rarely, there is a risk to vision because of bleeding behind the eye in the first few hours after the operation.

If you have:

- severe pain
- worsening vision
- swelling and a feeling that the eyeball is pushing forward

you must return to the ward right away, or to LRI Emergency department, if the ward is closed.

Contact details

If you have any concerns please call your ocular plastics team on **0116 204 7971**

For any urgent queries please call Eye Emergency department on **0116 258 6273**

Make a note of any questions you want to ask here:

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