

# Surgery for removal of an eye

Ophthalmology Department

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: April 2025

Next review: April 2028

Leaflet number: 986 Version: 3

## Introduction

Your eye doctor has recommended that you should have your eye removed. This leaflet will answer some of your questions. Speak to your eye doctor or one of the specialist nurses if you have any more questions.

## What are the two types of eye surgery?

- **Enucleation:** This is the removal of an eye. We will remove the whole eye and a piece of the optic nerve.
- **Evisceration:** This is where the front of the eye and its contents are removed. We leave the white part of the eye with the muscles attached.

We will carry out this operation under general anaesthetic. This is where we will put you to sleep.

We will give you information about general anaesthetic at your pre-assessment visit. If you have any more questions about this please write them down and bring them with you on the day of surgery. You can talk to your anaesthetist then.

Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## What are the reasons for removing an eye?

- Bad injury to the eye. This is when we cannot save the eye or our attempts to save the eye have failed.
- Painful, blind eye.
- Constant infection in a blind eye.
- Cancer of the eye (like retinoblastoma, melanomas, any other cancers of the eye or orbit). These are rare.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your eye doctor will talk to you about the benefits of the surgery before the day of your operation. They will also explain if you will have an enucleation or evisceration. They will explain which one is best in your case. If you have any more questions about the operation please call one of the specialist nurses. They will talk to you about your concerns on the phone or arrange another appointment for you.

## How long will I be in hospital?

You will normally stay overnight on the day of your operation. You may be able to go home the same day if there is someone to look after you. Or you may have to stay longer if we need you to.

## What will happen afterwards?

The nurse on the ward will give you advice on what happens after the operation. You will have a dressing pad on the eye that should stay in place until you return to clinic. We will make an appointment for you to come back to clinic. At the appointment the doctor will check your progress and talk to you about the next stages.

## How will my eye look after the operation?

When the eye is removed, we will often put an implant in the space where the eye was (the orbit). The implant is a plastic ball that keeps the natural shape of the orbit. It gives support for the fake (artificial) eye. The implant itself cannot be seen. At the end of the operation a clear plastic shell will be put in. This sits in front like a large contact lens. This is to keep the shape of your eye. We will then cover this with a pad.

We will remove the pad in clinic a few days after the operation. There will be some bruising and swelling at this time which is different for each patient. The eye lids may not open easily at first. They will slowly lift as the swelling goes down.

The shape of the eyeball will stay the same. There will be pink tissue (the same as the lining of the eyelid) rather than white or coloured. If you have lots of swelling after the surgery, we may use a stitch to hold the lids together. This will help control the swelling. The stitches will be removed in clinic when the dressing pad is taken off.

## **How soon will I get my artificial eye fitted?**

We will refer you to the National Artificial Eye Service. They will fit a temporary artificial eye from 6 to 8 weeks after the operation. They will send you an appointment to visit the artificial eye clinic. This is usually at Leicester General Hospital or Melton Mowbray Hospital. At the first visit they will give you a temporary artificial eye that best matches the colour of your other eye. They will also do detailed colour matching and take a mould of the socket. They do this so that your new artificial eye can be handmade to fit you and closely match your other eye.

## **Will the artificial eye move?**

The artificial eye sits behind the eyelids like a large contact lens. Most patients are able to move the eye a little. This is often less than the normal eye. You do not need to take the artificial eye out daily. Your doctor or a specialist in artificial eyes (prosthetist) will tell you how often you should. Most patients leave the artificial eye in for many weeks as it can be cleaned whilst staying in place.

## **What are the risks of surgery?**

Surgery to remove the eye is very safe. It is rare for patients to have complications in:

- bleeding
- infection
- scarring
- persistent swelling
- pain
- wound separating and the need for more surgery (sometimes years later)

Your doctor will talk to you about the risks with you before the operation. They will explain how it will be managed.

There is a very rare condition where the body reacts to the injured or diseased eye by attacking cells in the good eye. This is called sympathetic endophthalmitis. This can sometimes happen after major injury or surgery to an eye, including removal of the eye. If we do not treat this then the vision in the good eye can get worse. With modern surgery and treatments, if the condition should develop it is more easily dealt with than in the past. Your doctor will tell you if you are at risk of this condition.

## What will the pain be like after the operation?

We will give you pain relief during the operation. The anaesthetist will prescribe painkillers for you to have on the ward and at home. Follow the instructions that come with the medicine. Please let us know if you have a high level of pain and the painkiller tablets are not helping.

## What will I look like?

You will look different. Please know that the cosmetic results are good.

The images below show a former patient with and without an artificial eye.



**Without artificial eye**



**With artificial eye**

## What support is available?

This is a life changing operation. Not only for you but also your family and friends. Please ask if there is anything that you are not sure about.

If you or your family would like to talk about anything, please call of the specialist nurses, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm on 0116 204 7971.

**Changing Faces** is a charity organisation for people and families whose lives are affected by a scar, mark, or condition on their face or body, that makes them look different: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)

If you have any questions write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your consultant:

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