

Having stitches removed after a full or partial thickness cornea transplant

Ophthalmology Department

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Information for Patients

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What are corneal stitches (sutures)?

You have had a corneal graft. The stitches (sutures) are used to keep the graft tissue in place on the eye. These are not dissolving stitches, so will need to be taken out.

When we take out these stitches is different for each person. It has to be decided on an individual basis by your doctor.

In some patients, it becomes clear after the surgery that the stitches are causing distortion of the cornea (astigmatism). This may affect the quality of vision. We may have to adjust or take out the stitches sooner. We carry out adjustment in the clinic or in the operating theatre, depending on the patient.

How soon can you have the stitches removed?

The stitches can be removed between 18 to 24 months after full-thickness corneal transplant (penetrating keratoplasty).

If you have had a partial thickness corneal transplant (endothelial keratoplasty) the stitches are often removed between 2 to 4 months after surgery.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What happens when the stitches are taken out?

- We often do this under local anaesthetic while you are awake.
- We numb the eye with eye drops and the eyelids are held open with a clip.
- The doctor will remove the stitch 1 by 1.
- The length of the surgery depends on how many sutures need removing. It can take between 45 minutes to 1 hour.

What are the benefits?

Having the stitches removed helps to prevent infection, and reduces the risk of the corneal graft being rejected. It also helps with keeping your vision stable as the corneal shape can change if sutures break. After removing all the stitches around half (50%) of patients will need spectacles or contact lens for the best corrected vision.

What are the risks when taking out the stitches?

- Infection: this can be from within the eye or from the stitches removed.
- Wound leak: we would need to put stitches back in again from where they were taken out.
- Scarring: irregularity of the cornea where the stitch was removed from.
- Corneal graft rejection: to reduce this, continue with steroid drops as per advice.

What should I do after the procedure?

- Do not use tap water in the eye for 2 weeks after your surgery. Instead, use cooled boiled water.
- If you have had a full thickness graft, avoid heavy lifting. Try not bend over for long periods of time for 1 month after the stitches are removed.
- If you have had a partial thickness graft, you will be able to go back your normal activities after 2 to 3 days.
- We will give you antibiotic drop/ointment to use in the operated eye for 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery. We will tell you how often you should use the drops when you are discharged.



- You will also need to continue using any eye drops you may already use (such as steroid drops, glaucoma drops) unless you have been told to stop by your doctor/nurse.
- Please do not rub your operated eye as this can cause damage to the operated eye.
- We will see you in clinic around 4 weeks after the stitches have been taken out. This is to check everything is healing well.
- After the stitches are taken out, around 50% of patients will need spectacles or contact lens for best vision. Please ask your doctor/nurse for advice before going to the opticians.

What should I look out for?

Please contact us through the numbers below or go to Eye Casualty if you have:

- increased redness
- pain
- loss of vision
- an increased sensitivity to light

Contact details

If you have any concerns you can contact us on the following:

Corneal Specialist Nurse: **0797 094 0125**, Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm

Eye Casualty: **0116 258 6273**, Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 4.30pm
and weekends: 8:30am to 12:30pm.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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