Oculoplastic

Lower Eyelid Surgery Information (ectropion/entropion)

The lower eyelid can undergo changes that cause it to lose its correct position. Often, this can be due to aging changes as the skin becomes less firm. If the eyelid hangs down it can cause redness of the eye, discomfort and eye watering.

When an eyelid droops down it is known as **ectropion**.

When an eyelid turns in towards the eye it is known as **entropion**.

What are the symptoms?

The eye can become irritated and red. This is because the eyelid is no longer covering the eye properly, causing the eye to become dry.

Sometimes the drooping can be bad enough to give a 'blood-hound dog' look.

Eye watering may also occur because the tear duct in the corner of the eye is not in its usual position to assist in draining tears.

If the eyelid turns in (**entropion**) the eyelashes can rub on the surface of the eye. This irritates the eye and can also cause watering and conjunctivitis.

What are the causes?

In most cases it is due to aging changes causing loss of tightness of the skin and the eyelid.
tissues, allowing gravity to pull the eyelid down.

Sometimes it can occur because the skin below the eyelid becomes tight and pulls the eyelid down. Chronically sun-damaged skin tends to contract with age.

Other less common causes need to be excluded during your consultation.

**Will it get worse?** Depending on the cause the symptoms can slowly worsen with time.

**What can I do?** Some patients find that regular use of lubricant eye drops alleviates the symptoms caused by the drying of the cornea and eye. Antibiotic drops are only of use if bacterial conjunctivitis is present.

**Is an operation necessary?**

Many patients will benefit from surgery to restore the original position of the eyelid. The decision to have surgery depends on the severity of the medical problem as determined by your ophthalmologist and the pain and discomfort associated with the daily symptoms of the mal-positioned eyelid. Surgery may also be recommended for cosmetic reasons if the appearance has become unsightly.

The decision to proceed with surgery is always an individual choice for a patient, with advice taken from their surgeon.

**What does surgery involve?**

Surgery is performed at a day surgery (overnight admission is not usually required). The surgery generally takes around 40 minutes. A combination of local anaesthetic with intravenous sedation is used to make the patient comfortable. For this reason, an escort is required to take the patient home after they have been discharged from the day surgery facility.

The surgical incisions are usually made at the outer corner or underneath the eyelid, and dissolving sutures are generally used.

Some patients will require a skin graft to the lower eyelid. Skin is usually taken from the upper eyelid, or behind the ear, or occasionally the inner shoulder. This generally means a longer procedure and the eye-pads will need to be in place for up to seven days with the eye covered for this time. This is to ensure the health of the skin graft.

**What can I expect following the operation?**

The eyelid and eye are generally padded until the following morning (unless a skin graft is
used in which case the eyes are added for up to seven days). Bruising and swelling can be quite significant (especially if a patient is taking blood thinning medication) and may last up to two to three weeks. It is common for patients to experience worsening of their eye-watering symptoms in the first one or two weeks, until the eyelid has healed. For this reason the improvement as a result of the surgery may not be realised until several weeks after the operation.

Any pain or discomfort following the procedure is generally mild and can be managed with regular Panadol, or your usual pain relief medication. Some patients will have tenderness at the outer corner of the eyelid, which can persist for a few weeks. This is due to a deep suture used to tighten the lower eyelid to the bone, but this discomfort will improve with time as the suture absorbs.

**What are some of the risks of the operation?**

All surgery has inherent risks and it is important to balance these against the expected benefits. Your surgeon will discuss the risks and benefits that are most applicable to you.

Bruising and bleeding may be prolonged in some patients but these symptoms improve with time.Rarely, the eyelid may become infected, requiring antibiotics, or the healing may take longer than expected.

In some cases, the surgery may not improve the original symptoms caused by the eyelid mal-position. Some eyelids may be difficult to correct with surgery. It is very uncommon that the surgery would make the initial symptoms worse.

Sometimes the eyelid mal-position may recur despite successful surgery. This is uncommon but can happen early (in the first few weeks) or later (after several years). This may mean a second surgery is required to further repair the eyelid.

If a skin graft is used, the eyelid area can look different for the first few months. Sometimes the graft will contract with time and occasionally a second surgery is required to improve this.

Scarring around the eyelid is uncommon but the incision lines can remain red for up to six months in some people. However, the incision lines are generally hidden in the normal crease lines around the eyelid.

Surgery of any kind carries some inherent risks such as bleeding, bruising and allergic reactions. Your surgeon will discuss the risks that apply to you.