**Oculoplastic**

**Eyelid Reduction/Lift - Blepharoplasty Surgery**

Blepharoplasty surgery has become a popular procedure to remove excessive eyelid skin to reverse aging changes that may affect vision, comfort and appearance of the eyelids and eyes. Surgery of the eyelids alone can have a dramatic affect on the overall facial appearance, and it has a high satisfaction rate in those who have undergone the procedure.

Blepharoplasty is eyelid reduction surgery on the upper or lower eyelids in order to remove excessive and redundant skin and pockets of fat. The surgery is generally performed for two main reasons, either for:

- functional purposes, to reduce drooping eyelid skin that has begun to rest over the eyelashes and obstruct vision; or
- cosmetic purposes, to improve the appearance of eyelid changes associated with the effects of facial aging.

When the normal position of the upper eyelid droops and starts to block the vision, this is called a ptosis. This requires a different type of surgery, but is sometimes combined with blepharoplasty surgery.

**Which group am I in?**

There are strict eligibility definitions for blepharoplasty surgery under Medicare. If the Medicare criteria for functional surgery are not met, then surgery and associated costs are considered cosmetic and therefore not refundable by Medicare or Private Health Funds. Lower eyelid blepharoplasty surgery is always considered cosmetic surgery.

**What causes these eyelid changes?**

In the vast majority of people, the major causes are aging, sunlight exposure and genetics. As the eyelid skin is delicate and thinner than the rest of the body, aging effects are often seen here first. Sun damage and aging combine to cause skin to lose elasticity resulting in "bagginess" and loose redundant skin that droops due to gravity. The speed at which this occurs is due to multiple factors, including the genes you inherited from your parents and...
the amount of sun exposure you have had throughout your life.

Other changes include a weakening of the tissues around the eye, which allows fat to bulge forward, often prominent in the inner corner of the upper eyelids and lower eyelids. Smoking is a well-recognised cause of skin damage, which accelerates an aging facial appearance. Some people have chronic allergy problems which cause repeated swelling of the eyelids, resulting in loose skin being stretched that does not return to its original shape.

**What are the limitations of surgery?**

It is important to recognise the limits of any surgery. It cannot restore the quality of the skin to its youthful appearance and will not alter laugh lines, “crows feet” or the dark bags under the eyelids. It is important to have reasonable expectations for the outcomes of surgery, and in the case of a functional blepharoplasty this is to improve visual field obstruction and increase the amount of light reaching the eye.

**What does the surgery involve?**

After a thorough pre-operative assessment a date for surgery will be arranged in a day procedure surgery. Surgery is performed under local anaesthetic with sedation. Surgery usually takes up to an hour.

Upper lid blepharoplasty involves an incision along the skin crease line and excision of skin and fat. The amount of tissue removed is carefully determined at the time of the operation and the wound is closed with sutures that will either dissolve or require removal in approximately 7 days. This wound generally heals in the skin crease to reduce its visibility when the eye is open.

Immediately after the surgery, the eyes are covered with pressure dressings and ice is applied to minimise the expected postoperative swelling. These dressings are removed and the eyelid wounds checked before the patient is discharged to home in the company of an escort.

**What should I expect following the surgery?**

It is recommended to set aside two weeks from your normal work or duties. In the first two to three days the swelling and bruising are at their worst. Post-operative instructions in the use of ice and elevating the head as much as possible will reduce this. This will rapidly begin to improve and by the first week things may be returning to normal. Sometimes mild
swelling can persist for several weeks until the final healing process is complete.

Post-operative pain and discomfort is generally mild and easily controlled with over-the-counter pain medication. Some people will note the eyelid wounds develop an 'itch' as they heal.

**What are the risks of surgery?**

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. Complications from blepharoplasty surgery are very uncommon but a patient considering the surgery should be fully informed before deciding to proceed.

**Consultation**

Should you require a consultation for Oculoplastic conditions, please call 1800 986 695.

At Eye Surgery Associates we are able to offer you appointments at any one of our three sites: East Melbourne, Malvern and Doncaster.