

Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals **NHS**  
NHS Trust

Oxford Eye Hospital

# Squint surgery

Information for Adult Patients



This leaflet aims to give you some essential information about the surgery and your stay in hospital.

## What is a squint?

Eye movement is controlled by muscles that allow you to look up and down and from side to side without moving your head.

Normally, both eyes work together to form a picture on the retina, which is then interpreted by the brain. As each eye sees a slightly different picture, the resulting image is three-dimensional (binocular vision). This allows us to work out whether objects are near or further away (depth of vision).

A squint is a condition where one eye turns inwards, outwards, upwards or downwards while the other eye looks forwards. The misalignment of the eye is caused by an incorrect balance of the eye muscles. The medical name is Strabismus.

## Causes

Squint is a very common condition. It can be caused by:

- Hereditary factors, parents who squint are more likely to have children who squint
- Being long sighted
- Having different refractive errors in each eye
- Being born premature

- Birth trauma
- Illness e.g. high temperature & infections
- Syndromes e.g. Down's
- Injuries e.g. head injury.

## Squint surgery

There are six different muscles attached to the eyeball and they tend to work in pairs. During the operation it is normal that for a pair of muscles one is weakened and the other strengthened to make the eye straighter. In some cases adjustable sutures will be used, so that shortly after the operation any minor adjustments can be made to achieve the best possible position of the eye.

The operation is carried out under a general anaesthetic and is normally a day case procedure.

## Benefits

- To enable the eyes to work together
- To relieve diplopia (double vision)
- To improve appearance

Please note that in adults, squint surgery is not intended to alter the ability of the eye to see.

# Risks

Most eyes will be straighter after surgery. In some cases a secondary procedure may be required to get the optimum cosmetic result.

- Infection is a rare occurrence.
- The eye can be uncomfortable after surgery and regular pain relief is advisable for the first 3-4 days after the operation.
- Red eye (sub conjunctival haemorrhage) is a very common occurrence after squint surgery. This can take up to three weeks to resolve, but has no bearing on the success of the operation.
- There is a slight risk of injury to the eye ball with this procedure but it is very rare.

## Treatment before the operation

Before squint surgery an Orthoptic assessment is undertaken to monitor eye muscle movement and help the surgeon plan the surgery. The Orthoptic team will be involved in the post operative review.

A routine Pre-Operative Assessment will be undertaken to assess your fitness for surgery and to address any specific questions related to the operation and aftercare.

# What happens on the day of surgery?

As the operation is performed with a general anaesthetic you will be advised of the pre-operative starvation period before your admission and whether to take any medications you may already be prescribed for other health conditions.

You will need to arrive on the ward at 7.30 a.m. in order to see the anaesthetist and the surgeon. They will talk to you about the operation and make sure you are fit for the general anaesthetic. If your written consent has not already been taken for the operation at the assessment clinic, it will be taken at this stage.

## Going to the operating theatre

You will be asked to remove your clothing apart from your underpants and to wear an operating gown. Most patients are also given anti-embolic stockings to wear for the duration of the operation and recovery period. These help reduce the risk of blood clots or deep vein thromboses (DVT) forming in your legs whilst you are in hospital and less active than normal.

Ladies are advised to not wear makeup or metal hair clips or grips on the day of surgery.

The operation takes between 30-40 minutes to perform although the time you spend in the operating department will depend on the time it takes to anaesthetise you and for you to wake up afterwards. This can vary greatly between individual patients.

Occasionally your eye is padded at the time of the operation. When this pad is removed it is likely to be blood stained. Your eye may weep blood stained tears and this is considered entirely normal.

## After the operation

It is normal for most adult patients to be discharged from the hospital on the same day depending on recovery from general anaesthetic.

Your eye will be bloodshot and may be sore after the operation. Regular pain relieving tablets such as paracetamol are recommended for 3-4 days after the operation.

Your eye patch (if you have one) will be removed and your eye bathed.

You will be asked to instil eye drops or eye ointment for up to two weeks after the operation. The drops are antibiotic and anti-inflammatory drops to prevent infection, reduce swelling and relieve pain. You will be shown how to use these drops before you leave the ward.

Our Orthoptic team will arrange your follow up appointment in the Out-patient clinic for approximately one week following your surgery

## Aftercare

Please do not rub or touch the eye for at least two weeks after the operation.

If your eye weeps gently dab it with a clean tissue each time. Please remember in the first few days after surgery your tears may be blood stained.

To bath your eye use some cooled boiled water and cotton wool to gently clean your eyelids.

Please wear your eye shield for 2 weeks at night or when bathing, showering or washing your hair.

Avoid vigorous sports and swimming for up to one month after the operation.

## Follow-up

You will normally be reviewed in the Out-Patient clinic in the Oxford Eye Hospital 1 week after your operation. This review will be with the Orthoptic team. The surgeon will be on hand in clinic if there are any problems or concerns.

# How to contact us

In the event of any worsening pain or double vision or if you have any concerns regarding your surgery, please contact:

Our Eye Emergency Department

Tel: (01865) 234800

or one of the Eye Nurses from the Lichfield ward on

Tel: (01865) 231296

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Rebecca, Matron for Specialist Surgery  
Version 1, December 2009  
Review, December 2012  
Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordradcliffe.nhs.uk)