

SQUINT SURGERY

WHAT IS A SQUINT?

A Squint is a misalignment of the two eyes, so they do not look together towards the same object. An eye may turn in (esotropia) or turn out (exotropia). Occasionally one eye may be higher or lower than the other (vertical squint). The squint may be there all the time (constant squint) or only some of the time (intermittent squint)

WHY WOULD SOMEONE NEED SQUINT SURGERY?

A squint may need correcting for a few reasons:

- To restore ocular alignment
- To relieve symptoms, such as double vision or eye strain from effort, to control the squint (this rarely applies in children)
- To enable the eyes to work together, which could improve depth perception (3-D vision)

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

Surgery will only be suggested when there are no applicable alternatives in your / your child's case. Your orthoptist and doctor will discuss the best treatments for you/your child with you.

In some cases, Botulinum Toxin injections may improve a squint's size, but the effects are generally short term and it is rarely appropriate for the management of squints in children.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING SURGERY?

Around our eyes are six eye muscles. The muscles sit just underneath a clear surface layer close to the front of the eye. In a squint, these muscles can be too strong/too weak and by changing their position, tightening or loosening, we can alter the position of the eye. The muscle is detached and reattached to a new position using stitches that dissolve within six to eight weeks. The eye is **never** taken out the socket during surgery. The doctor will tell you what muscle(s) will be operated on; this can be to one or both eyes. The operation is performed under general anaesthetic.

The operation itself normally takes around 1-1.5 hours depending on how many muscles are being operated on. After this, there will be a period of recovery from the anaesthetic (normally a few hours). You will be discharged home once the nurses are happy with your recovery.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS?

Squint surgery is a relatively safe procedure. Complications are rare, but nearly all can be treated effectively.

GENERAL ANAESTHETIC - Anaesthetics are usually safe, but there can be small and potentially serious risks (1: 200,000). Each patient will be seen and assessed individually by an experienced anaesthetist and any risks will be discussed and questions answered. You can find more information for general anaesthetic here: www.rcoa.ac.uk/childrensinfo

DOUBLE VISION – There is a small risk you may develop double vision after the operation. This is often temporary, and usually does not apply to children. If it should persist, the Orthoptist will discuss whether changing your glasses, prescribing prisms, eye exercises or if further surgery is needed.

UNDER OR OVER CORRECTION – the squint may be under or over-corrected after surgery. In a small percentage of cases, it may be necessary to carry out a second procedure.

INFECTION – There is a very small risk of infection in the eye which can permanently affect the vision (1: 50,000). During surgery, perforation of the eye and retinal damage may occur.

ALLERGY – Some patients might have a mild reaction to drops prescribed after surgery. This results in itching / irritation and some redness and puffiness of the eyelids. It usually settles very quickly when the drops are stopped.

REDNESS AND SCARRING – Your eye will be very red after the surgery. The redness in your eye and most of the scarring is not noticeable after three months. Occasionally, the eye does not completely return to its normal colour and mild visible scars may remain, particularly in cases of repeated operations.

HOW WILL I/MY CHILD FEEL AFTERWARDS?

The eye may be red, gritty and a little sore and you may experience blurred vision.

If you are having a squint operation with adjustable sutures, some manipulation will be performed on the same day before the discharge from the hospital. This is done under local anaesthetic and most patients experience only mild discomfort. Occasionally, patients may be required to return to the hospital the following day for this procedure.

HOW LONG WILL I/MY CHILD BE IN HOSPITAL?

Squint surgery is a day procedure. Occasionally an overnight stay is needed if recommended by anaesthetist and booked/discussed prior to the surgery.

We encourage parent/carer to be with their child on the ward for the day. You can go with your child to the anaesthetic room and, if you wish to, you can stay until he/she is asleep. During the operation the nurse will ask you to wait back on the Unit or to go for a coffee. After the operation, the nurse will take you to the recovery room so you are there as your child is waking up.

Once your child is awake, the nurse will take you to the recovery unit. There will be a bed there for your child to rest until they are ready to go home.

What should I do when I/my child go home?

You will be given eye drops/ointment to take home and should use these as instructed. You will be given directions on how to instil the aftercare eye drops and how long for in the ward after your surgery. It is important to instil the prescribed medication to prevent infection. You are normally given drops or ointment to instil daily for 2-4 weeks.

The eye can often become sticky. In this case, use cold boiled water with clean cotton wool and wipe gently.

If you wear glasses, you should continue to wear them as normal.

The eyes may be sore after surgery - you may take over-the-counter painkillers as appropriate.

HOW SOON WILL I BE ABLE TO RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITIES?

You can return to normal daily activities but should avoid strenuous physical activity or contact sports for at least four weeks and swimming for four to six weeks.

Adults: It is recommended you consult your surgeon about when you should drive following surgery. **You should not drive if you are experiencing any double vision.**

WILL I HAVE TO COME BACK TO HOSPITAL?

An appointment will be made for you to return to the eye clinic to see a doctor and an orthoptist soon after your surgery.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK / SCHOOL?

Children can generally return to school 1 week after surgery.

Adults may return to work 1-2 weeks following surgery.

WILL I NEED GLASSES AFTER SURGERY?

If you require glasses to see normally, you will still need them post-surgery. Squint surgery does not eliminate the need for glasses. Your Orthoptist will discuss this with you before surgery.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

If you have any further questions, please raise these with your Orthoptist or the medical team at your next appointment.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments!

We are always interested to hear your views and feedback. If you have any comments about our leaflets or service, please scan QR code below.



Please ask your nurse or doctor if you have any further questions.

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