

Introduction

Eyelid surgery repairs sagging or drooping eyelids. The surgery is also known as blepharoplasty, or an eyelid lift. Sagging or drooping eyelids happen naturally as we age. Some people are born with droopy eyelids. Some people develop diseases that cause eyelid drooping.

This reference summary explains eyelid surgery. It discusses the procedure as well as its risks and benefits.



The Skin and the Eyelids

The skin is the body's largest organ. Skin protects us against heat, light, injury and infection. Skin also regulates body temperature and stores water and fat.

As we get older, our skin changes. It starts to wrinkle, lose its elasticity and sag. Smoking and exposure to the sun speed up the changes in the skin as we age. These changes can lead to facial wrinkles and sagging skin. Our face is the first thing people see and notice. It shows our expressions, feelings and personality.

Women's faces begin to change at an earlier age than men's. This is because women's skin is thinner and does not have as much blood supply. Changes usually start in the early 40's for women and the late 40's for men.



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Your eyelids help protect your eyes. When you blink, your eyelids spread moisture over your eyes. Blinking also helps move dirt or other particles off the surface of the eye. Closing your eyelids when something is coming towards your eyes can protect them from harm. As you age, your eyelids stretch. The tissue structures and muscles that support your eyelids weaken. The skin may start to sag.



Fat that normally stays in the area around the eye can move forward below your eyes. This may cause sagging eyebrows, drooping eyelids and bags under your eyes. The space below your eyes can accumulate fluid. This can make the area under the eye look puffy or swollen. Severely sagging skin around your eyes can make you look older and tired. It can also impair your peripheral, or side, vision.

Facial Cosmetic Surgery

The decision to have cosmetic surgery should be made by you and your health care provider. Work together to make an educated decision about whether the surgery will be safe and effective.

The health care provider needs to evaluate your general health and find out what you expect from facial surgery. He or she will then examine your eyelids and your face. Your health care provider may recommend one or more specific facial cosmetic procedures. You should have realistic expectations about what cosmetic surgery can do for you.

You should also understand the possible risks and complications, as well as the cost of the surgery. If you have the surgery only to improve your appearance, your insurance provider probably won't cover the cost.



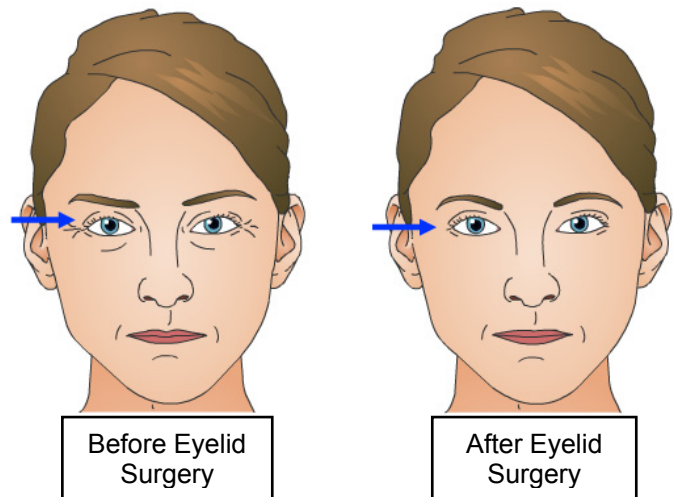
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Eyelid Surgery

Eyelid surgery is a procedure to repair droopy eyelids by removing excess skin, muscle and fat. You might consider it if drooping or sagging eyelids:

- Keep your eyes from opening completely.
- Pull your lower eyelids down.
- Impair your vision.
- Make you look older or tired.

Removing excess tissue from one or both eyelids can improve your vision. It can also make your eyes appear younger and more alert.



Alternative Treatments

Alternative treatments to eyelid surgery can also reduce eye puffiness, bags under the eyes and drooping eyelids. Applying cold compresses or sleeping with your head raised can help reduce or eliminate puffy eyes.

To naturally reduce eye puffiness or sagging eyelids:

- Avoid salty foods.
- Drink lots of water.
- Get enough sleep.

Skin treatments, such as chemical peels, may improve skin tone and tighten the skin. They may lessen the appearance of puffiness and tighten the skin around the eye. Skin resurfacing is a procedure that is less invasive than eyelid surgery. It removes damaged skin and boosts the production of collagen around the eyes. Collagen is a protein found in cartilage and other connective tissue.



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Botox® can be used to improve facial wrinkles. It also can be used to reduce the sagging of the lower eyelids and raise the upper eyelids.

The Procedure

Eyelid surgery rarely requires a hospital stay. The surgery is often done in a surgeon's office or as an outpatient surgery in a medical center. It may take between 1 and 3 hours to complete.

An eyelid lift is usually done while you are awake. A cosmetic surgeon injects medicine around your eye to numb it. Medication may be given to you intravenously to help you relax. You should not feel pain during the surgery. Intravenous, or IV, is medicine injected into or within a vein.

If you are having surgery on both of your eyelids, the surgeon usually will work on your upper lids first. The surgeon makes tiny cuts along the natural fold of the upper eyelid. Loose skin and some muscle and fat beneath the skin are removed. The incision is closed with tiny stitches that leave a nearly invisible scar. Sometimes surgical tape or skin adhesives are used instead.



The incision on the lower lid is made just below the lashes. It is made in your eye's natural crease or inside the lower lid. The surgeon then removes or redistributes excess fat, muscle and sagging skin. Stitches may follow the lower lid's natural crease. They may be placed inside the lower eyelid.

Risks

As with any surgery, eyelid surgery carries some risks, such as infection or a reaction to anesthesia. Most healthy people don't have any problems with anesthesia. Although many people have mild, temporary symptoms, anesthesia itself is very safe.

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Complications of anesthesia are rare. They happen most frequently in older adults or people with serious medical problems.

Complications include:

- Temporary mental confusion.
- Lung infections.
- Stroke.
- Heart attack.
- Death.



Other possible risks of eyelid surgery include:

- Temporary numbness of the eyelid skin.
- Dry, irritated eyes.
- Temporary vision changes, such as double vision.
- Impaired eyelid function.
- Scarring.
- Injury to eye muscles.
- A very small risk of blindness due to bleeding behind the eye.

Talk to your health care provider about how these risks may apply to you.

After the Procedure

After eyelid surgery, you will spend time in a recovery room. You will be monitored for complications. You should be able to leave later that day to rest at home.

A lubricating ointment will be applied to your eyes to protect them and prevent dryness. The ointment may cause temporary blurred vision. Right after surgery, you may also experience:

- Excessive tearing.
- Light sensitivity.
- Double vision.



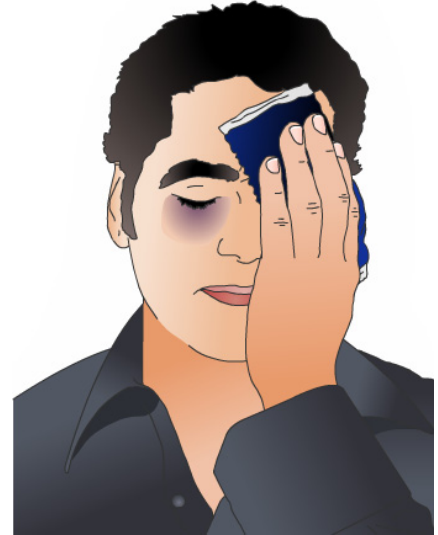
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Your incisions will be red and visible at first. Scars from the incisions may take six months or longer to fade. Your eyelids may be puffy and feel numb for several days. If stitches were used, they will be removed after three or four days. Swelling and bruising, similar to having "black eyes," will likely last a week or more. Ice packs or cold compresses held to your eyes can help reduce swelling.

Pain after eyelid surgery is usually minimal. You may be given a pain reliever for mild discomfort. Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen or naproxen. These medications may increase your risk of bleeding.

After surgery:

- Avoid straining, heavy lifting and swimming.
- Avoid strenuous activities, such as aerobics and jogging.
- Wear sunglasses to protect the skin of your eyelids from sun and wind.
- Sleep with your head raised higher than your chest.
- Don't smoke.



Follow your health care provider's instructions. He or she will teach you how to cleanse your eyelids. You will be given antibiotic eye drops or ointments to prevent infection.

Seek medical attention immediately if you experience:

- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pains.
- An unusual heart rate.
- Bleeding.
- Vision problems.



Many people express satisfaction with the results of eyelid surgery. They look more rested and youthful. For some people, results of eyelid surgery may last a lifetime. For others, eyelid drooping eventually may recur.

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Summary

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As with any surgery, eyelid surgery carries some risks, such as infection or a reaction to anesthesia. An eyelid lift is usually done while you are awake. A cosmetic surgeon injects medicine around your eye to numb it. You should not feel pain during the surgery. Removing excess tissue from one or both eyelids can improve your vision. It can also make your eyes appear younger and more alert. Many people express satisfaction with the results of eyelid surgery. They look more rested and youthful.



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