

Advice following squint surgery

This leaflet aims to give you important information following your squint (strabismus) surgery. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor, nurse, or orthoptist.

What did my squint surgery involve?

Each eye has six muscles that can easily be accessed through the conjunctiva (the membrane surrounding the eyeball). Under a general anaesthetic, the position of the muscle(s) has been adjusted to alter the alignment of your eyes.

What does an adjustable stitch involve?

You may have had an adjustable stitch as part of your operation.

This technique is used to improve the success rate of operation, if appropriate. At the end of the operation, the muscle was secured with an adjustable stitch that remained loose in your eye. This is similar to the knot used when tying your shoelace. This may have been adjusted and will have been secured by the surgeon before allowing you to go home.

What are the dos and don'ts after surgery?

Do:

- Use the antibiotic / anti-inflammatory eye drops prescribed after the operation for one month at least, or according to the advice of your surgeon.
- Take care when washing your face and hair to avoid getting soap or shampoo in your eyes.
- Take 1-2 weeks off work / school / college etc to help with recovery and avoid picking up an infection.
- Use a clean tissue every time you need to wipe your eye (do not rub your eye, either with a tissue or your fingers).
- Leave your eye uncovered if you wish.
- Follow any advice given to you by your surgeon, orthoptist or ophthalmic nurse.

Do not:

- Go swimming for 4 weeks after your operation. This is to prevent infection.
- Drive or operate machinery or sign any legal documents for at least 48 hours after having a general anaesthetic.
- Drive or operate machinery, if you have any double vision, as it may be dangerous and will invalidate any insurance you may have if you have an accident.
- Wear contact lenses until you have been advised that it is safe to do so by your eye care practitioner. You should wear glasses until it is safe to re-start contact lens wear.

- Rub your eye with a tissue or your finger. You should only gently wipe your eye with a clean tissue.
- Play contact sports for 6 weeks.

What can I normally expect after squint surgery?

- **Pain:** Pain and discomfort lasts for a few weeks and can be relieved by taking pain relief medication, for example Paracetamol. If you are already taking pain relief medication for a different condition, continue with these, but do not take both.
- **Swelling and bruising:** Can last for 1-2 months and is usually worse in the morning.
- **Stitches:** Most of the stitches used will slowly dissolve by 6–8 weeks after surgery. Occasionally, a permanent stitch needs to be used but this will be discussed with you if it is.
- **Blood-stained tears and watering:** This is common for the first few weeks. Blood will be seen on the tissue when you wipe your eye.
- **Blurred vision:** This is common in the operated eye. It will usually improve over several weeks. New glasses or a change of glasses may be required once your vision has settled.

What are the unwanted effects following surgery?

- **Under-correction of the squint:** Further treatment may be necessary. This may involve surgery, botulinum toxin (Botox) injection or prism glasses (which bending the light to compensate for an eye muscle weakness).
- **Over-correction of the squint:** This may improve with time. Further treatment may be necessary. This may involve surgery, botulinum toxin injection or prism glasses.
- **Double vision occurring after the operation or getting worse:** This may improve with time as your eyes gradually get used to their new position. If it does not, then further treatment may be required, which may involve prism glasses, occlusion (patching), botulinum toxin injection or a repeat operation.
- **An allergic reaction to antibiotics / anti-inflammatory drops:** The drops should be stopped if this happens and a different type of drop may be prescribed.
- **Rarely, there is a change in the refractive error of the eye:** This happens when the shape of your eye keeps light from focusing correctly on your retina. This may result in you needing glasses or a change in your present glasses prescription.
- **Visible scarring on the eye:** This is usually seen when the eye has had more than one operation. A minor amount of scarring on the conjunctiva is common. The scarring can take up to 2 years to fade and you may notice it more after swimming or exposure to cold winds. Severe scarring may require another operation to remove the scar.
- **Persistent redness of the eye:** Commonly, the redness of the eye goes by 2 months after the operation. Occasionally, slight redness may continue up to 2 years, especially after swimming or exposure to cold winds.
- **Retained stitch or a late reaction to a stitch:** The stitch may need to be removed if this happens.

- **Loss of sight:** This is an extremely rare complication. It can result from an infection, bleeding inside the eye or a retinal detachment.
- **Severe pain, heavy discharge of pus or marked loss of vision:** If you experience severe pain, a lot of pus discharge or a marked loss of vision, **please contact us as soon as possible** (numbers below) or go to A&E immediately if out of hours.

Resuming activities

- You should be able to return to work or school / college after 1-2 weeks.
- Avoid vigorous sports and swimming for up to 1 month after the operation.
- Driving can only be resumed 48 hours after your operation, if you are not experiencing any double vision. **You should not drive if you have double vision.**
- You should return to wearing your glasses as soon as possible, unless advised otherwise by your orthoptist.
- It is safe to use your eyes normally for visual tasks, such as reading and watching TV.

Your follow-up appointment

You will normally be reviewed in the outpatient clinic around 2 weeks after your operation. It is important that you attend this appointment. You will be assessed by one of the orthoptists, who will assess your eye movements and measure any remaining squint. You may need to wait to see the surgeon in clinic if there are any problems or concerns. **Please bring your glasses to this appointment, even if you feel that they are not right for your eyes after the surgery.**

The information in this leaflet is intended as a guide only, as each patient's experience will be different.

Contacting us

Eye Casualty (Reading):	Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5pm; Sat 8.30am-12.30pm; Closed Sun & bank holidays.
Eye Casualty (PCEU Windsor)	Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5pm; Sat 8.30am-12.30pm; Closed Sun & bank holidays
Dorrell Ward (Reading)	0118 322 7172 (24 hours a day)
Eye Day Unit (Reading):	0118 322 7123 (Mon-Fri 7am to 6pm)

Outside of Eye Casualty hours, you should telephone your GP's out of hours' service, ring NHS 111 or if you have serious concerns, visit your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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