

Blepharoplasty for removal of excess skin from the upper eyelids

What problems can excess skin of the upper eyelids cause

Excess skin of the upper eyelids (*dermatochalasis*) occurs in most people with age. It is due to a combination of factors, including loss of elasticity in the skin, redundancy of skin, thinning of the outer layer of the skin and drooping of the eyebrows above.

The excess skin hangs in folds in the upper eyelid, particularly in the middle and outer aspect of the eyelid. This will mask the natural crease of the eyelid and may also hang onto the eyelashes themselves. It is often accompanied by bulging of fat behind the upper eyelids, which appear as little bags/swellings in the upper part of the eyelids.

It can cause multiple problems including:

- Loss of the upper and outer field of vision as the excess skin hangs down. This may lead to problems with driving or reading
- Irritation of the eyes, as excess skin pushes the eyelashes and eyelid margin onto the surface of the eye
- Heavy tired feeling in the eyes, especially toward the end of the day
- Frontal headache, as compensatory lifting of the brows is used to try and lift the excess skin off the eyelids
- Unsatisfactory tired and aged look to the face

Dermatochalasis is often accompanied by other problems, in particular, drooping of the eyelids (*ptosis*) and the eyebrows (*brow ptosis*). For the best surgical result to improve function and appearance, these conditions may need to be treated at the same time as the dermatochalasis.

What are the benefits of blepharoplasty surgery?

Blepharoplasty surgery aims to remove the excess skin to improve both the function and appearance of the upper eyelids. The overall effect will also help to rejuvenate the whole face, and may result in giving a marked improvement in the youthful appearance of the face.

The benefits of blepharoplasty surgery may include:

- Improvement in upper and outer field of vision
- Improvement in comfort of the eyes
- Elimination of forehead headaches from compensatory brow overaction
- Improved and more youthful appearance to the eyelids

Important things to know before your blepharoplasty surgery

Different patients will undergo blepharoplasty surgery for different reasons. For many, it will be to improve vision or comfort, and for others it will be a mostly cosmetic procedure to improve appearance.

Dr Then will carefully examine your eyelids and eyes and will then thoroughly discuss the best treatment options for you, to help you achieve the goals that you have in mind. It is important that expectations are realistic about what blepharoplasty surgery can achieve for your face. Age, skin type, structure of underlying bones and soft tissue, and any other associated problems, will all influence the results of your blepharoplasty surgery.

As with any surgery, knowing what you want to achieve, and whether these expectations can be met, are crucial.

How is blepharoplasty surgery performed?

Surgery is usually performed under local anaesthetic, and as a day case procedure.

First, Dr Then will mark your natural skin crease in the upper eyelid, and then make further markings to map out the degree and contour of excess skin to be removed.

An injection of local anaesthetic is then given beneath the skin of the upper eyelid to completely numb the area.

An incision is made into the natural crease of the eyelid, which will minimise the visibility of any future scarring. The marked area of excess skin is then removed. If necessary, any excess and bulging fat is also removed at this time.

Finally, the skin wound is carefully closed with fine sutures, which are a combination of self-dissolving and non-dissolving sutures. The non-dissolving sutures are usually removed around 10 days after surgery.

After surgery, the eyes will be padded for a short time with cold compresses applied, to minimise bruising and swelling. The eye pads are removed before you are discharged home.

What should I expect after blepharoplasty surgery?

Many patients will experience dry eyes after the surgery. Whilst this is temporary, if you suffer with dry eyes prior to surgery, surgery may worsen your dry eye symptoms. Dry eyes can be easily treated with artificial tears readily available at any pharmacy.

Early bruising and swelling of the eyelids are very common. Bruising usually resolves within 7-10 days. Swelling occurs in the upper eyelid and may extend to below the eye. This swelling can take up to 6 weeks or longer to disappear completely. However, it is important to remember that it can take up to 6 months for the wound and eyelid to settle to its final shape and appearance.

Unsightly scarring of the eyelid is very uncommon. However, the eyelid wound will initially appear lumpy and pink for the first few months. Usually by 6 months, the wound has healed to a minimal line, which is hidden within the natural skin crease and only visible when the eyes are closed.

What are the risks of blepharoplasty surgery?

Most patients do not experience significant complications with blepharoplasty surgery.

However, the risks of blepharoplasty surgery include:

- Bleeding and bruising
- Infection
- Over or under-correction of skin removal
- Asymmetry of skin removal between the left and right eyelids
- Dry eye
- Poor eyelid closure
- Unsatisfactory scarring, or cysts/whiteheads along the suture line
- Temporary patches of numbness in the eyelid
- Persistent eyelid swelling
- Bleeding in the orbit of the eye, leading to loss of vision (only if fat removed)

Many patients are concerned that they will be left with a “surprised” or “operated-on” look after blepharoplasty surgery. If performed properly, this is very unlikely, and Dr Then is careful to remove only as much skin as is required. The removal of too much skin not only leads to an unsatisfactory appearance, but also the risk of not being able to close the eyes properly, which leads to dry and uncomfortable eyes.

Many patients will experience temporary dry eyes after the surgery, which can be easily treated with artificial tears. However, if you suffer with dry eyes prior to surgery, surgery may worsen your dry eyes, but symptoms can be easily treated with tear drops.

Unightly scarring and persistent eyelid swelling are rare complications. Dr Then will generally try and hide any skin incisions in your natural creases. However, it is impossible to absolutely control how you scar, as this will depend on how your skin heals. Most scars will soften and fade to a minimally visible line, but this can take 6 months or longer. Occasionally there will be permanent loss of colour (hypopigmentation) or excess colour (hyperpigmentation) in the scar. Unfortunately, this is difficult to treat if it occurs.

Loss of vision is a very rare complication, and only occurs when orbital fat is removed at the time of blepharoplasty surgery. Every precaution is taken during surgery to minimise this rare risk.

Patient acceptance of risk

It is impossible for Dr Then to inform of every possible complication that may occur. Results cannot be guaranteed and more treatment/surgery may be necessary.

We confirm you have signed a consent form with Dr Then to proceed with this procedure. Dr Then has answered any questions to your satisfaction and costs of having upper lid blepharoplasty performed have been explained.

If you have any additional queries, please do not hesitate to call 9535 4321.