

Ptosis repair for drooping upper eyelid

What is ptosis?

Ptosis is drooping of the upper eyelid margin (where the eyelashes are) to an abnormally low position. In adults, ptosis can be due to many causes, and it is crucial that the correct cause is identified for the correct treatment to be applied. Whilst there are many causes for ptosis, in most cases it is due to aging of the muscle and its tendon that lifts the upper eyelid. It usually affects both upper eyelids but one side may appear lower than the other. Age-related ptosis is often accompanied by other changes in the eyelid, including excess eyelid skin and droopy eyebrows.

What problems can ptosis cause?

Patients with age-related ptosis will experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Looking tired or “sleepy-eyed”
- “Heavy” discomfort in the eyelids, especially at the end of the day
- “Tired” eyes when reading, watching TV, computer work
- Blockage of the superior or central vision from the droopy eyelids
- Frontal headaches, from having to lift the eyebrows to help lift the droopy eyelids

In severe cases of ptosis, some patients may have to lift their chin or use a finger to manually lift their eyelids to see.

Ptosis due to aging is unlikely to spontaneously improve. There are no medications or eye drops that will definitively treat age-related ptosis. Eye “exercises” also have not been shown to be of any benefit in improving ptosis.

How is ptosis treated?

Age-related ptosis is treated with surgery. Surgery aims to identify, tighten and reattach the muscle and its tendon to improve the height of the upper eyelid to a more normal position.

What are the benefits of ptosis surgery?

The benefits of ptosis surgery may include:

- More “awake” and refreshed appearance
- Improved field of vision
- Reduced “heavy” or tired feeling to the eyelids

The aims and goals of surgery will be individualised to each patient and be comprehensively discussed before surgery to ensure an optimal outcome.

Important things to know before your ptosis surgery

Different patients will undergo ptosis 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 ptosis surgery performed?

Ptosis surgery is usually performed as a day procedure, and under local anaesthetic.

If ptosis surgery is required to both eyes, it is Dr Then's preference to complete each eyelid surgery separately, usually 1 to 2 weeks apart to allow time initial swelling to settle so that the first eyelid is close to its final height and contour before operating on the second eyelid.

At the time of surgery, an incision is made in the natural crease of your upper eyelid and the levator muscle is identified and tightened with internal sutures. The skin is then closed with external sutures. These sutures are a combination of self-dissolving and non-dissolving sutures.

If the patients also has excess skin or fat in the upper eyelid, this will be removed at the same time as the ptosis surgery if appropriate. This is known as blepharoplasty surgery and is completed simultaneously to ensure the best possible outcome from the procedure.

After surgery, the eyes will be padded overnight, to minimise bruising and swelling. The eye pads are removed the following morning by the patient and an appointment for follow-up with Dr Then will be approximately 10 days after the procedure, for review and removal of stitches where necessary.

What are the risks of ptosis surgery?

It is important to remember that ptosis surgery is not an exact science. Whilst every effort is made to achieve the desired height, contour, shape and symmetry between the eyelids, the final result may occasionally be unsatisfactory. Approximately 1 in 20 patients will require “touch-up” surgery to address any sub-optimal results.

The risks of ptosis surgery include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Over-correction
- Under-correction
- Asymmetry between the eyelid heights or contours (shapes)
- Infection
- Scarring of the eyelid
- Cysts or whiteheads along the skin suture line
- Temporary numbness of the eyelid skin
- Dry eyes

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.

Very rarely, vision loss can occur if there is bleeding into the orbit around the eye. This is more likely to occur in ptosis procedures where excess fat is removed from the eyelids, or in patients who are on anti-coagulant medication (eg Warfarin, Clopidogrel).

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 ptosis surgery performed have been explained.

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