

Ectropion surgery for out-turned lower eyelid

What is ectropion?

An ectropion is an abnormal outward turning of the margin of the eyelid (where the eyelashes are). This usually refers to the LOWER eyelid. Occasionally it can be seen in the upper eyelid.

In most cases, an ectropion is seen in the older adult and is due to aging of the tissues of the eyelid that support and hold it in place. Stretching or detachment of these supporting structures results in the eyelid turning outward (ectropion).

Less commonly, an ectropion may develop from scarring of the outer skin of the eyelid from previous trauma or surgery, or from the weight of an eyelid tumour or lump.

What problems can ectropion cause?

An ectropion usually causes one or more of the following symptoms:

- Watery eye
- Excess mucous/sticky discharge in the eye
- Irritated eye
- Red eye, or reddened lower eyelid margin

In many cases an ectropion will continue to worsen and may cause complications in the eye itself. These include exposure and drying of the eye, which can then lead to persistent infections or scarring of the eye.

How is ectropion treated?

Dr Then will diagnose the presence and cause of your ectropion with a thorough examination of your eyes and eyelids.

An ectropion will not spontaneously correct itself and is best managed with surgery.

In situations where surgery is not possible (for example, if the patient is not medically fit for surgery) or not desired by the patient, there are some non-surgical methods. These include the use of cautery or radiofrequency to reposition the eyelid. However, these measures are often temporary, and the ectropion is more likely to recur than after surgery.

What are the benefits of ectropion surgery?

The aim of surgery is to restore the normal position of the eyelid margin so that it looks normal and allows the eye to close comfortably. This can be performed as a day case under local anaesthetic.

How is ptosis surgery performed?

Ectropion surgery usually involves tightening and reattachment of the supporting tendons and retractor muscles, via incisions made in the outer corner and internal aspect of the eyelid. If the ectropion is due to external scarring, then skin grafts may be required.

What should I expect after my surgery?

After surgery, all patients will have some bruising and swelling of the lower eyelids which may extend into the cheek or lower face and neck. This usually recovers over a few weeks after surgery.

The eyelid often feels and looks tight. It can take up to 6 weeks to soften and settle into its final position as healing progresses. The eye may feel gritty, irritated or watery in this period also, but also usually settles with time. Regular artificial tears can ease these symptoms.

There may be tenderness and lumpiness in the outer corner of the eyelid. This is due to scar tissue forming over the internal sutures used to tighten the outer eyelid, and usually settles within the first 3 months. .

Dr Then will review the eyelid one week after surgery, and then again after 3 months, to ensure that the patients has achieved a good result and is comfortable.

What are the risks of ectropion surgery?

This surgery is confined to the eyelid tissues, and does not involve the eye itself. Therefore there is no risk of visual loss with this surgery.

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

- Over-correction or under-correction
- Asymmetry of eyelid position
- Infection
- Suture granuloma over the scar tissue at the outer corner of the eyelid
- Recurrence of ectropion and need for further surgery

These risks are uncommon and can be successfully treated if they occur.

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 will sign a consent form with Dr Then to proceed with this procedure.

Dr Then will answer any questions to your satisfaction prior to signing of the consent form and costs of having lower lid ectropion surgery performed will be explained.

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