

Eyelid surgery or blepharoplasty

An eyelid is a thin fold of skin that covers and protects an eye. With the exception of the prepuce and the labia minora, it has the thinnest skin of the whole body. The levator palpebrae superioris muscle retracts the eyelid to "open" the eye. This can be either voluntarily or involuntarily. The human eyelid features a row of eyelashes which serve to heighten the protection of the eye from dust and foreign debris, as well as from perspiration. "Palpebral" (and "blepharo") means relating to the eyelids. Its key function is to regularly spread the tears and other secretion on the eye surface to keep it moist, since the cornea must be continuously moist. They keep the eyes from drying out when asleep. Moreover, the blink reflex protects the eye from foreign bodies.

Who benefits from lower eyelid surgery?

Lower eyelid surgery may be a good solution for individuals who experience 'bags' or lines under the lower eyelid. Aging, among other factors (smoking for example), may leave people wanting a fresher, more youthful appearance, and lower eyelid surgery can create a smoother, brighter look.

Procedure

Lower eyelid surgery is usually performed under general anesthetic. An incision is made along the natural crease of your lower eyelid, just below the lower lashes, or on the inside of the eyelid. Excess fat or skin (or both) is then removed, or in some cases the extra fat is moved behind the muscle. The leftover skin is then pulled upwards, creating tension and a smooth effect. Finally the incision is closed with stitches, which will need to be removed a few days later (unless dissolvable).

Recovery period

You should try to rest for around 7-10 days following lower eyelid surgery, keeping the eye area as clean as possible (your surgeon will advise you on this) and your head elevated when lying down. Once the bandages have been removed, vision may still be slightly blurry but will settle shortly. You will need to take one week off work and if stitches need to be removed, they will be taken out after a few days. Make-up should not be worn for a week, and contact lenses for two weeks. You may encounter possible side effects to lower eyelid surgery including bruising, swelling, dry, itchy eyes and blurred vision, but these will all settle down within a few weeks.

Risks

There are certain risks involved with lower eyelid surgery; damage to the eyeball, partial or complete blindness, bleeding under the skin, infection, blood clot formation, asymmetrical eyes or a sunken appearance if too much skin or fat has been removed. You may be more at risk if you suffer from certain conditions, including dry eye and Graves' disease.