

Patient information

Squint Surgery

St Paul's Eye Department

Squint Surgery

Your Consultant/Doctor has advised you to have squint surgery. This information leaflet helps explain what is involved. There may be alternative treatments available. Please ask your doctor or Orthoptist to discuss these with you.

What is a squint?

A squint refers to an uneven alignment of your eyes. It may be present all the time or only at certain times such as when you are tired. It may also be associated with the symptom of double vision.

What is squint surgery?

Squint surgery is an operation to adjust the action of the muscles attached to the surface of your eye. This is done so there is an improvement in the position of your eyes.

What are the benefits of having squint surgery?

Squint surgery is performed when it is important to improve the alignment of your eyes. Squint surgery is performed for a number of reasons, the two most common being to treat double vision and or to normalise the appearance of the eyes.

Are there any alternatives available?

Alternative treatments will have been discussed with you by your doctor.

Alternative treatments include patching the eye (occlusion), altering your glasses (prism therapy) or Botox injections. Not all treatment options would be suitable for all patients.

What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

You would continue to be cared for at St Paul's Eye Unit until the decision that there is no further possible improvement to be made.

What are the risks of having squint surgery?

It is not always possible to achieve perfect alignment of the eye and some degree of misalignment is common. There is a possibility of double vision following surgery and the doctor and orthoptist will discuss if this is a particular risk with you. As with any operation on the eyes, there are risks of infection, bleeding and pain. There is also the rare risk of penetration of the eye when the muscles are sutured back onto the eye. You will be left with fine scars in the membrane covering the surface of your eye.

What sort of anaesthetic will be given to me?

Squint surgery is done under general or local anaesthesia. General anaesthesia is drug-induced unconsciousness. Local anaesthesia means that your eye and surrounding area is numbed from an injection but you are awake.

General anaesthesia is always provided by an anaesthetist, who is a doctor with specialist training. Local anaesthesia is provided by either an anaesthetist or ophthalmologist.

Unfortunately, general anaesthesia can cause side effects and complications. Side effects are common, but are usually short lived: they include nausea, confusion and pain. Complications are very rare, but can cause lasting injury: they include awareness, paralysis and death.

The risks of anaesthesia and surgery are lower for those who are undergoing minor surgery, and who are young, fit, active and well.

You will be given an opportunity to discuss anaesthetic options and risks before your surgery.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your Consultant or a member of their team.

Getting ready for your operation

You will be seen in the pre-operative assessment clinic before you are admitted to hospital. This is within twelve weeks of your operation.

Tests

Depending on the type of anaesthetic you will be given, the following tests may be needed: blood tests; heart tests; urine tests; weight; blood pressure.

It may be necessary for you to strip to the waist and wear a hospital gown to undertake these tests. Female patients will need to remove tights. Lockers are provided.

These tests are important for you and the department. It is better to find out about any problems at this stage than to come into hospital expecting to have an operation, only to be told it has been cancelled for medical reasons.

If there are any complications, our doctors will refer you to the appropriate hospital specialist or to your family doctor (GP). You will be told if this is the case.

Important

- Please do not forget to bring a urine sample with you to your pre-operative assessment, together with a list of your current medication
- If you have diabetes or travel by ambulance, it may be worthwhile bringing a sandwich with you.

Orthoptic Assessment

You will need to be assessed by an Orthoptist at least twice before your squint surgery.

It is important to attend these appointments, as your surgeon will not be able to perform your squint surgery without these measurements.

Information and Assessment

You will be encouraged to ask questions and talk about your condition and operation. A qualified ophthalmic nurse will explain your care plan in detail using a specially designed care programme.

The day of your operation

- You will come into hospital on the day of your operation.
- Please leave all cash and valuables at home. If you need to bring valuables into hospital, these can be sent to General Office for safekeeping. General Office is open between 08.30 and 4.30 Monday to Friday. Therefore, if you are discharged outside these times we will not be able to return your property until General Office is open. The Trust does not accept responsibility for items not handed in for safekeeping.
- You will be asked to remove jewellery - plain rings can be worn but they will be taped.
- Please leave body piercings at home. False nails and nail polish will also need to be removed if worn.
- If you are on regular medication, you will be told to take this if necessary.
- You will be asked to put on a gown.
- A bracelet with your personal details will be attached to your wrist.

- You may be prescribed some medication to take before your operation by the anaesthetist. A member of the nursing staff will give this to you.
- A nurse and porters will take you to the operating theatre.
- Your dentures, glasses or hearing aid can stay with you on your journey to the operating theatre.
- When you arrive in the theatre department, you will then be asked to put on a disposable hat.
- The ward nurse will then leave you and you will be taken into the anaesthetic room and a theatre nurse will check your details with you.

The operation

The aim of the operation is to adjust the action of the muscles attached to the surface of your eye. This is done so that there is an improvement in the position of your eyes.

An incision is made in the covering membrane of the eye to expose the eye muscles. The muscles are then detached from your eye before being sutured (stitched) back in a different position. The muscles may also be shortened to change their action. The small cut made in the tissue covering your eye is then closed. The operation usually takes about an hour and depending on the type of squint, either one or both eyes may be operated on. More than one operation may be needed.

What should I expect after my operation?

- After your operation you will be kept in the theatre recovery room before being transferred back to the day ward.
- A nurse will check your pulse, blood pressure, breathing and wound regularly.
- The nursing staff will also advise you when you can start taking sips of water. Anaesthetics can make some people sick.

- If you feel sick we advise you not to drink until this feeling has passed. The nursing staff may offer an injection to help this sick feeling go away.
- You may have a pad over your operated eye, which will be removed either later the same day or the following day.
- The treated eye will be red and slightly swollen. The redness can take up to six weeks to fade.
- The first time you get out of bed, please make sure you ask a nurse to be with you. This is in case you feel dizzy.

Discharge Information

Pain relief and medication

- Drops or ointment will be given to you to be used for a few weeks after surgery to help your eye heal.
- Paracetamol or other medications to relieve discomfort can be taken. Your pharmacist or general practitioner can advise you about pain relief.

Going Home

You will usually be allowed to go home on the same day as your operation.

If so and you have had a general anaesthetic and/or sedation, **you must have a friend or relative to take you home and have a responsible adult to stay with you for 24 hours.**

For next 24 hours you must not

- Travel alone.
- Drive any vehicle.
- Operate machinery (including domestic appliances such as a kettle).

- Climb ladders.
- Make important decisions, sign any business or legal documents.
- Drink alcohol.
- Return to work within 12 hours of treatment. Your general health and any medicines you are taking may increase the time you need off work.

You should

- Take it easy for the rest of the day, avoid strenuous activity.
- Take your medications as usual.
- Let someone else care for anyone you usually look after, such as children or elderly or sick relatives.

If following discharge, you develop

- A persistently high temperature.
- A sticky yellow discharge with increased redness and swelling of your eye.
- Turning of your eyes in completely the opposite direction.

You should contact the hospital using the telephone number at the end of this information leaflet.

Getting back to normal

- Normal activities can be resumed as soon as you have recovered from the operation and the general anaesthetic. This may take a few days.
- Contact sports and swimming should be avoided for the first month.
- Eye make-up and contact lenses should be avoided until the eye has healed.

- For the first couple of weeks, avoid getting soap or shampoo in your eye while washing since these will sting though will not cause any particular harm to the operation.

Returning to work

The advised time off work is usually one to two weeks.

Further Appointments

An appointment will be given to you to be reviewed in the outpatient clinic by the orthoptist.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

Orthoptic Department

St Paul's Eye Unit

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Text phone number: 18001 706 3914

www.cesp.co.uk

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