FAQ

(Blepharoplasty)

**What is blepharoplasty?**

Blepharoplasty refers to eyelid surgery, which is designed to remove the excess fat, along with skin and muscle, from the upper and lower eyelids. It is the second most common cosmetic procedure performed with about 50,000 persons having the procedure in the United States each year.

**What is the success rate of cosmetic eyelid surgery?**

Eyelid surgery is very successful in patients who have been properly educated and have reasonable expectations. Realistic expectation on the part of the patient is critical to success. Sagging tissue of the eyelids and bulging fat pads can certainly be removed.

**Can eyelid surgery remove the wrinkles around the eyes (crow’s feet), elevate droopy eyebrows, and take away dark circles under the lower eyelids?**

Eye Physician San JoseNo, the blepharoplasty surgery will not be able to achieve all of this. As the skin tightens, many wrinkles go away. Some fine ones may not. Dark circles under the eyes may improve a bit if this is related to large bags, but most often the dark appearance of the lower eyelid skin remains.

**How about bags in my lower eyelids that make me look tired?**

The fat is removed with the laser through the inside of the eyelid. The upper and lower eyelid surgery can be done together at the same time.

**What can be done for dark circles under my eyes?**

Dark circles may be treated by lower eyelid surgery if it results from shadowing due to bulging fat or bags. If the dark circles result from pigmentation changes of eyelid skin, skin bleaching creams or light chemical peels may improve this condition.

**How do you decide whether I need an upper eyelid lift or a brow lift?**

When someone complains of the appearance of the upper eyelids, the first thing we do is evaluate whether the problem is excess skin in the upper eyelids, or if the eyebrows have lowered in position over time. If the eyebrows are in good position, then we can perform the upper eyelid surgery to remove the excess skin. If the eyebrows are particularly low, the doctor raises the patient’s forehead skin by hand to an appropriate level. If most of the upper eyelid skin disappears, a patient would most likely benefit from a forehead lift.

**Who is a candidate for blepharoplasty?**

A natural part of the aging process is the development of wrinkles, often around the eyes. Skin around the eyes also becomes less elastic, resulting in droopy eyelids. Sometimes this happens at an early age. You may start working your forehead muscles harder in an effort to lift your drooping eyelids. This may cause brow aches and fatigue. If you are having these symptoms, or simply do not like the way your eyelids appear, you may be a candidate for a blepharoplasty.

**Are there any visible scars from the blepharoplasty surgery?**

Most of the time there is no visible scar after the healing is complete. Incisions in the eyelids are made following natural skin folds and creases. Once healed, the hairline scars will fade, leaving a very inconspicuous incision line that becomes virtually unnoticeable after the healing.

**Can I participate in the decision-making process of where the incision is placed?**

Your surgeon will show you how the crease can be created on your eyelid, and discuss with you where you would like it to be placed. The final decision is yours, together with what the doctor feels would work well with your own eyelid shape.

**Will my eyelids look the same after surgery?**

Most patients’ two eyelids are a bit different. The goal of the surgery is to make them look exactly the same. It is generally the result but cannot be guaranteed.

**Is the result of eyelid surgery permanent?**

The goal is to create a permanent crease. Generally speaking, the benefits of a blepharoplasty are long lasting, and few people need to have the procedure done a second time. Fat that has been removed will not come back. Of course with aging, the skin gets looser and can hang down. The procedure cannot alter or retard the natural aging process. But the crease generally is permanent.

**Will I be in pain?**

After any surgical procedure, some discomfort can be expected. All patients are provided with prescriptions for pain medication. Patients have surprisingly little discomfort after most eyelid procedures. Generally over the counter Tylenol is all patients need (together with ice packs) placed over their eyes for 24 hours. An occasional patient will report unmanageable pain after surgery.

**How will I feel after my surgery?**

Your eyes are never patched closed. After surgery, patients usually spend at least one day resting with their head elevated on a pillow and often apply ice packs to reduce swelling. Some patients report a dull headache and tenderness or discomfort. You may also experience bruising and temporary numbness. Later on, you might experience some itching during the healing process.

**How long does the surgery take?**

Surgeon spends about half an hour with you discussing where the crease should go. The length of surgery depends on several factors including the complexity of each person’s eyelids. Usually, surgery takes about an hour.

**How long does the whole process take?**

We ask you to arrive at the center half-an-hour before surgery and stay until you are ready to go home. The whole procedure generally takes about two to three hours for upper and lower eyelids.

**Can I drive myself back home?**

No, you should not drive yourself. Someone will need to drive you home after your surgery and stay with you overnight. Someone will need to drive you back to our office for your first postoperative appointment.

**How long will it take before I look normal?**

Usually, patients look normal after about two to three weeks of surgery. Some patients heal faster, and others take longer. The crease is high just after surgery, and gets lower as the swelling resolves. You will look better at six weeks and even better still at six months. Final results are evaluated at one year. However, at two weeks you know you are well on the way to recovery. After three months, most patients have about 90% of their final result.

**Is there swelling and bruising after the procedure?**

There is usually some swelling which gradually resolves after one to two weeks. There may be some bruising, but very little and this too fades rapidly. Women can camouflage bruises fairly easily at seven to ten days with make-up.

**How safe is the surgery? Are there any complications or side effects?**

All surgeries have some risks. If performed by a competent surgeon, complications are infrequent and minor. The vast majority of these operations go perfectly well with excellent results and happy patients. All patients will experience some bruising and swelling for a few days after the surgery. The risk can include creases that do not form where they are planned, and can be too low or high, or not deep enough, or not exactly the same in both eyes. In addition, a temporary problem with closure of the eyelids is usually seen. Some may have temporary blurring of their vision, usually due to the ointments applied to the incisions post operatively. Any surgery has some risk of bleeding and infection. Wound disruption and heavy scarring are also possible. These are very rare in this surgery, and there are other complications are even less common. For some of these complications, a touch-up procedure might be necessary for correction. Will discuss any possible risks with you before surgery is done, and answer all of your questions. Visual impairment is extremely rare. There may be some temporary sensitivity to bright light or wind and we recommend wearing dark glasses when outside.

**When can I resume regular exercise or play sports after surgery?**

You should plan to take it easy and put ice on the eyelids for two days, and not work out or play sports for a week. Aerobic and other exercise programs are not allowed for at least two weeks to decrease the risks of bleeding, swelling and bruising. More strenuous activities, such as weight-lifting and contact sports, are not allowed for at least one month. Absolutely no bending, lifting or straining during the postoperative period as these activities can increase swelling and delay healing.

**When can I return to normal activities?**

Most patients watch TV and listen to radio 1-2 days after surgery. People generally can read and work at the computer 3-4 days later, though the eyes fatigue faster than usual.

**When can I take a shower or tub bath?**

You may take a tub bath and wash your hair in the sink any time following the procedure. Hot steamy showers should be avoided because they could prolong swelling. Routine showers at one week are fine.

**When can I wear contact lenses after surgery?**

Generally, you should stay out of contact lenses for two weeks after surgery.

**What to do before the surgery?**

* Blood-thinning medicines (e.g. aspirin, aspirin cardio, Tiatral, Marcoumar, Sintrom, AlkaSeltzer, Ponstan etc.) should be stopped if possible 5 days before the operation. Do not stop taking these medications of your own accord: we will discuss this in advance with your family doctor. If you have noticeable bruises or if you have persistent bleeding after injuries, this is also taken into account in the surgical planning.
* For the last 5 days prior to the operation, avoid analgesics (e.g. headache) containing acetylsalicylic acid, which is included in medications including Aspirin, Aspirin Cardio, Tiatral and AlkaSeltzer. Other painkillers are allowed.

**What should I do on the day of the surgery?**

* You should appear without makeup and bring dark sunglasses.
* Limit smoking if possible. Smoking leads to increased bleeding during the operation and, as a consequence, to bruising and poorer wound healing. In general, smoking should be reduced or, ideally, stopped in the days before and after surgery.