

Excess Upper Eyelid Skin

As we age, the skin loses elasticity and the upper eyelid skin can droop. While small amounts of excess skin may be a cosmetic problem, large amounts of skin may impair the vision by getting in the way. Patients with this problem find themselves having to raise their eyebrows in order to see. When the vision is significantly impaired by excess eyelid skin, medical insurance may cover an eyelid lift surgery (blepharoplasty).

Blepharoplasty is an outpatient procedure that takes 30 minutes. The incision is placed in the natural eyelid crease so that it is hidden once the surgery heals. Patients undergoing blepharoplasty are given heavy sedation through an I.V. by an anesthesiologist while Dr. Gray injects numbing medicine into the upper eyelids. Because of the sedation, patients do not experience discomfort from the injection. The extra skin is removed and the incision is closed with very fine sutures.

The improved vision from the surgery usually is realized the day of the surgery. The cosmetic benefits generally take 1-6 weeks to develop. Using iced compresses the day of the surgery helps to minimize the swelling and bruising. The sutures are removed one week after surgery. It is important to expect quite a bit of bruising and swelling as the surgery heals. By one week after surgery, most of the bruising is usually gone. The swelling and redness often lasts for several more weeks, and small amounts may remain for up to one year along the incision line.

Prior to a blepharoplasty, a computerized visual field test is done to document the amount of visual impairment. The eyelids are taped up and out of the way, and the visual field is repeated to show that the extra skin is the source of the problem. Pre-operative photos are also taken at that time. These pre-operative documentations are done in order to show the medical insurance company that the blepharoplasty is not being done as merely a "beauty treatment."

Blepharoplasty is a very low risk surgery, but there are risks associated with any surgery. The doctor will discuss the risks with patients considering having it done.