

Adult squint surgery

Orthoptics

Information for patients and carers

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Caring for you

Introduction

This leaflet has been written to provide information about squint surgery.

Please read this leaflet carefully. If you have any questions, speak to your eye surgeon or orthoptist.

This leaflet explains:

- what a squint is
- why surgery may be needed
- how the operation is performed
- the benefits and risks of surgery
- what happens before and after surgery
- frequently asked questions

What is a squint?

A squint (also known as strabismus) is when the eyes do not point in the same direction.

One eye may turn in, out, up, or down. The squint may be present all the time or only appear when looking in certain directions or when tired.

What is the aim of surgery?

Squint surgery may be recommended to:

- improve the position of the eyes
- help the eyes work together
- reduce or improve double vision
- improve appearance and confidence

The surgery does not always remove double vision completely. In some cases, double vision may change after surgery and may take time to adjust to.

Squint surgery does not remove the need for glasses. Most patients will still need to wear glasses after the operation.

How is squint surgery performed?

There are 6 muscles attached to each eye. These muscles control eye movements.

During surgery, the surgeon changes the position or strength of one or more eye muscles. This helps improve the alignment of the eyes.

The operation:

- is performed under a general anaesthetic, so you will be asleep
- usually takes between 30 and 60 minutes
- is performed on the muscles attached to the outside of the eye

Adjustable stitches

Sometimes the surgeon may use adjustable stitches.

If this is planned, it will be discussed with you before surgery.

After the operation, the surgeon and orthoptist will check the position of your eyes. If needed, the stitches can be adjusted using local anaesthetic eye drops to improve the result.

What happens before my surgery?

1. Waiting list

Once surgery has been agreed, your name will be added to the waiting list.

2. Orthoptic pre-surgery assessment

You will be given an appointment with an orthoptist before surgery.

During this visit, your squint will be measured again to make sure there have been no significant changes.

It is important that you attend this appointment. **If you do not attend, you may be removed from the waiting list.**

3. Pre-operative assessment

You will also attend a nursing and medical assessment before surgery.

This appointment is routine before any operation under general anaesthetic. You will be asked questions about your health and may have some basic tests.

4. Surgery date

You will receive a letter with the date of your surgery and information about preparing for your operation.

What happens on the day of surgery?

You will:

- attend the Ophthalmic Day Surgery Ward at Warrington Hospital
- meet your surgeon and the doctor who will give your anaesthetic.
- Undergo the operation
- most likely go home on the same day

Before going home, you will be given:

- eye drops
- advice on caring for your eye

The nursing staff will explain how and when to use your eye drops.

What happens after surgery?

You will usually be seen by an orthoptist within 4 weeks of your operation.

The consultant will review the outcome of your surgery.

After surgery it is normal to experience:

- redness of the eye
- mild discomfort or soreness
- a gritty feeling in the eye
- watering of the eye
- temporary blurred vision

These symptoms usually improve as the eye heals.

When to seek urgent help after surgery

Seek urgent help, if you experience:

- sudden loss of vision
- severe pain not relieved by painkillers
- increasing redness or swelling

- yellow discharge from the eye

What are the risks of squint surgery?

All operations carry some risks. Serious complications from squint surgery are uncommon.

Common risks and side effects

The squint is not fully corrected	The operation may improve the squint but not correct it completely. Some patients need another operation to achieve the best result.
The eye turns too far in the opposite direction	Sometimes the eye may end up turning too far after surgery. Further treatment or another operation may be needed.
Redness of the eye	Redness is common after squint surgery and may last for up to three months. If you have had previous eye muscle surgery, the redness may last longer.
Irritation or itching	It is common for your eye to feel itchy, sore, or as though there is something in it after surgery. This feeling is often caused by the stitches, which dissolve on their own over time. Some people may also have a mild reaction to the stitches or ointment used during surgery. This can usually be treated easily.
Dry eyes	Some people develop dry eyes after surgery and may need lubricating eye drops.

Scarring	Scars are usually not noticeable after healing. In rare cases, scars may remain visible, especially if previous surgery has been performed on the same eye
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Less common risks

Double vision	Some patients notice double vision after surgery. This is often temporary and improves with time. Treatment may include: • prism glasses • botulinum toxin (Botox) injections • further surgery Very rarely, double vision can be permanent. Your surgeon will discuss this risk with you if it applies to your situation.
Slipped muscle	Very rarely, a muscle moved during surgery can slip from its new position. If this happens, further surgery may be needed.
Infection	Infection after squint surgery is uncommon. Most infections can be treated with antibiotic eye drops. Very rarely, a serious infection can develop behind the eye.

Damage to the eye	Very rarely, the eye can be accidentally damaged during surgery. This may require further monitoring or treatment. In extremely rare cases, it can affect vision.
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Frequently asked questions

How long will I need off work?

Most people need up to 1 week off work.

Your surgeon may recommend a longer period depending on your job.

When can I go swimming?

You should wait 3 weeks before swimming to allow the eye to heal.

When can I play contact sports?

You should avoid contact sports for 4 weeks after surgery.

Will I still need to wear glasses?

Yes. Most patients will still need their glasses after surgery.

Can I watch television, read, or use a computer?

Yes.

These activities will not damage your eyes after surgery.

You may notice temporary blurred vision or double vision while your eyes are healing.

If these symptoms do not improve, contact the Orthoptic Department.

When can I drive?

You must not drive immediately after surgery.

You should only return to driving when:

- your vision meets the legal driving standard
- you are not experiencing blurred vision or double vision
- you feel safe and comfortable to drive

Important information

Please do not wear eye make-up or false eyelashes on the day of your surgery.

Contacts and further information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

- **Orthoptic Department**
01925 662772
- **Ms Razzouk's Secretary**
01925 662403
- **Waiting List Team**
01925 662979 or 01925 664209
- **Ophthalmology Triage (emergencies only)**
01925 662694