

Patient Information Sheet

Eyelid Surgery & Brow Lift

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What is eyelid surgery and brow lift?

Eyelid and brow surgery aims to improve the appearance of the upper part of the face.

Background

Patients considering eyelid surgery often have ‘bags’ affecting the upper and/or lower eyelids and a generally tired expression. The problem may be compounded by descent of the brow. With time, many people also develop vertical frown lines at the base of the nose and transverse wrinkles of the forehead. Often there is a hollowness just below the lower eyelids due to the descent over time of the tissues which in youth are positioned over the cheek prominence.

Preoperative assessment

Each of these components of the upper and mid face need to be considered in turn. Significant droopiness of the brow can only be carried out by a brow-lift, which nowadays is done using small incisions placed within the hairline with the help of an endoscope. Heaviness of the upper lid can be due to the presence of excess skin, particularly on the outer aspect and prolapse of the fat, especially on the inner region. Lower eyelid ‘bags’ can have a fatty component and there may be some excess skin, but current practice is moving away from fat removal toward repositioning. Excess fat removal can lead to a hollow eye appearance and if too much skin is taken away, the white part of the eye shows below the iris. The hollowness below the lower eyelids is best addressed using a (mid face) SOOF lift. This is repositioning of the fat below the muscle of the lower eyelid and it has been refined to elevate *en bloc* all the soft tissue structures over the malar region or the cheekbones.

The operation

Eyelid surgery alone can be performed under local anaesthesia but a general anaesthetic is required for a brow lift or a (mid face) SOOF lift. You will be asked not to eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the operation. During all of these procedures, local anaesthetic solution is injected to reduce bleeding and provide postoperative pain relief.

Brow lift: Five 1cm long incisions are placed just behind the hairline. With the help of a small telescope and camera the entire forehead can be elevated, concentrating the pull on the outer part of the eyebrows. The muscles at the root of the nose can also be weakened, reducing the frown lines.

Eyelids: For the upper lid, the scar is positioned in the natural skin crease. Any excess fat is removed and the skin adjusted. For the lower eyelid, the incision is placed just below the eyelashes. The fat is repositioned or trimmed and any excess skin taken away.

SOOF lift: This is the repositioning fat below the muscle of the lower eyelid and it has been refined to elevate *en bloc* all the soft tissue structures over the malar region or the cheekbones. The operation is done via the incision used for the lower eyelid. The fat, skin and muscles of the midface down to the vicinity of the upper teeth can be freed up and the entire structure lifted to overlie the cheek bone. Because the components are not separated, a more natural and harmonious effect is achieved and this is in effect a component of the subperiosteal facelift.

After surgery

Brow lift: Immediately following the operation there is swelling and bruising and the latter may extend to the eyes. The bruising settles over a period of about 2-3 weeks but the swelling takes longer to resolve completely. The stitches or clips used to close the skin incisions are removed at 5-7 days. There is often some numbness of the forehead and scalp, and this improves over about 3 months. Tiny screws may be used to hold the suspension and these will have to be removed subsequently. You may initially feel that the eyebrows have been overcorrected initially, but this settles over a few weeks.

Eyelids: Most of the bruising and swelling has settled by about 2 weeks and the scars continue to improve for 3 months. Recovery from the swelling is enhanced by sleeping with 3-4 pillows for the first few days and some patients find that taking Arnica tablets for a week or so before surgery also decreases the swelling.

SOOF lift: The swelling and bruising is more pronounced than following eyelid surgery alone. The swelling may take 3 months or so to resolve completely but most patients are able to return to a normal routine within a couple of weeks. There is often some numbness of the cheek, extending down to the upper lip caused by bruising of the infraorbital nerves. This also improves over a period of a few weeks. There is sometimes some crinkling of the skin at the outer corner of the eye, which also settles with time.

Possible complications

- As after any surgery, bleeding or infection can rarely occur.
- Following brow lift, occasionally there is some thinning of the hair in the region of the incisions but this settles after about 3 months. Rarely the hair loss may be permanent.
- Rarely, the scars following an endoscopic browlift need to be revised
- Injury to the nerves supplying the muscles of the forehead can occur, resulting in droopiness of the brow, but this usually resolves spontaneously.
- Some patients report odd sensations within the scalp following surgery.
- Following eyelid surgery, dryness or excessive watering of the eyes may occur and this usually settles once the tightness of the scars has improved.
- In a few people the scars can become red and thickened, and cysts can develop in the scars