

Frequently-Asked Questions about Surgery

1. How soon after surgery may I return to work/school?

In many cases that do not require general anesthesia (being put completely to sleep), you will feel well enough to return to regular activity within 2-3 days after surgery. Some people find their vision is blurry from tearing and the use of ointments for several days after surgery. If you have had general anesthesia, your recovery may be longer, on the order of 5-7 days. Due to bruising and swelling, many patients prefer not to go out in public for several days (see #7 below).

2. What kind of anesthesia will I have?

Most eyelid and tear duct operations are performed under “twilight” anesthesia in which an anesthesiologist administers sedatives and painkillers through an intravenous line while you are breathing on your own (similar to the type of anesthesia given for colonoscopies). Most orbit (eye socket) surgeries or surgery to remove a diseased eye are done under general anesthesia where a machine breathes for you. You will be required to get a physical by your regular doctor before you can have anesthesia.

3. How soon after surgery may I drive?

If you have received “twilight” or general anesthesia, you may not drive or operate heavy machinery the day of surgery. You will need someone to drive you home from the hospital. When you feel ready to drive depends a lot on how comfortable your eyes feel and how clear your vision is.

4. Will my eye(s) be bandaged shut after surgery?

In most cases, there will be no bandage covering the eye(s). In certain tear duct surgeries, there will be a bandage on the side of the nose for a few days, but you will be able to open your eye after nearly all surgeries. When an eye is removed, a snug bandage is often placed over the socket for several days.

5. *Will I be in a lot of pain after my surgery?*

Most people who have eyelid or tear duct surgery require only extra-strength or regular Tylenol once they get home from the hospital. Many people who have had eye socket surgery will need narcotic strength medicine for comfort the first 24-48 hours after surgery. If necessary, Dr. Fountain will prescribe this for you.

6. *Will I need someone to stay with me after surgery?*

In most cases, you will be able to care for yourself after surgery. However, it is always helpful to have someone around to give you some assistance so you can relax once you get home. You will be given medicated ointment or drops to place on your stitches and/or in your eye each day for one week. For eye socket cases you may also be prescribed a short course of antibiotics and/or steroids.

7. *How long before I look like myself again?*

The face, including the eyelids, has a rich and abundant blood supply which aides in wound-healing and decreases the risk of infection. However this rich blood supply may result in DRAMATIC and DISFIGURING bruising and swelling for one to two weeks after surgery. People who have surgery on both eyes will have more bruising than those who have surgery on just one side. The morning after surgery is usually when you will look your worst. Most people see a dramatic improvement over the first week. Much of the swelling and bruising is usually gone by two weeks. In rare cases, mild swelling and bruising can persist a month or more. It is common for surgery on the upper lids to cause bruising and swelling in the lower lids/cheeks due to gravity.

8. *When do I come back for my post-operative checks?*

In most cases, you will be seen in clinic about one week after surgery. This visit is to check wound-healing, make sure there is no infection and to remove stitches if necessary. In most cases you will then be asked to return 4-6 weeks later for a final check.