

Child Squint Surgery

Information for families

What is squint surgery?

During squint surgery the eye muscles are adjusted to make them stronger or weaker, thus re-positioning the eyes in relation to each other. The surgery is performed under general anaesthetic as a day-case procedure on the Eye Unit at Maidstone Hospital.

Squint surgery may be recommended for children who have a very noticeable squint. Surgery may also be recommended to help correct double vision.

Does squint surgery have any risks or complications?

As with all surgery, there are risks, the most common being:

- **Under-correction.** Sometimes the results of surgery may not be as good as expected; further surgery may be required.
- **Over-correction.** The eyes may turn slightly the other way, but this may improve in the first few months after surgery.

The very rare, but serious, risks of squint surgery are:

- **Double vision.** This may well improve in the first few months after surgery.
- **Eyesight problems.** Sometimes patching may be needed after surgery to prevent a 'lazy eye' developing; however, eyesight problems from the actual surgery are very rare.
- **A 'slipped muscle'.** If the muscle fails to attach properly to the eye immediately after the surgery another operation will be needed.
- **Complications associated with anaesthetics.**

What happens before my child is admitted?

Your child will attend a clinic at Maidstone Hospital about two weeks before their operation. They will be seen by the orthoptist and the surgeon, and then by a nurse on Monckton children's ward. You will be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any concerns or questions you can discuss these at the clinic.

What happens on the day of surgery?

Your child will be admitted to Monckton ward on the day of surgery. The anaesthetist will examine your child and talk to you about the operation. For a period of time before the anaesthetic, normally six hours, your child will not be able to eat or drink anything. One parent will be able to accompany their child into the anaesthetic room until they fall asleep.

What will happen during surgery?

Surgery is performed with the eye remaining in its socket. The operation may take up to an hour and a half, after which time you will be reunited with your child. Your child may have a pad placed over their eye immediately after surgery. It is only in place to protect the eye from inadvertent scratching and will be removed when your child has woken up. It will not be replaced with a dressing as these can increase the risk of infection. Your child's eye will be red, their eyelids may be slightly red and swollen, and their tears may be pink. This is quite normal.

How long will my child be in hospital?

After the operation, if your child is well and able to eat and drink you will be able to take them home. However, if your child is unwell, they may need to remain in hospital overnight; this happens only infrequently.

When will my child be able to resume normal activities?

- They will not be able to go swimming for up to four weeks following the operation.
 - They should avoid sandpits and try to avoid getting dirt in the eye for up to two weeks following the operation.
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- You can help the eye heal by backwashing your child's hair and trying to prevent your child from rubbing the eye.

Will my child need any drops or ointment?

You will be given drops or ointment to put in your child's operated eye for up to four weeks after squint surgery. Initially drops should be applied three times a day but will be tailed off as the eye heals.

Always thoroughly wash your hands before applying eye-drops or ointment. If necessary use cooled, boiled water to bathe the eye. Children's paracetamol can be taken to relieve any pain or discomfort.

What about school?

Your child may return to nursery or school one week after surgery, but parents often feel their children need a second week off.

What about my child's glasses?

If your child already wears glasses they will need to continue wearing them after the operation unless you are advised otherwise.

After the operation

- The stitches on the surface of the eye dissolve so do not need to be removed.
 - It is quite normal for the eye to be red for several weeks following the operation.
 - Your child will be given a follow up appointment with the orthoptist and doctor two weeks after surgery.
 - If you have any questions about your child's appointments or treatment, please contact one of the orthoptic departments on the front of this leaflet.
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What to watch out for after you go home

If your child has a lot of pain, if their eye becomes redder, or if it will not open, please contact:

Rapid Access Service (Eye Department, Maidstone Hospital)

 01622 226228

For further help or advice please contact:

- **Your GP**
- **NHS Direct**

 0845 46 47

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Clinic contacts

Maidstone Orthoptic Clinic

 01622 226236

Pembury Orthoptic Clinic

 01892 633891

Medway Orthoptic Clinic

 01634 830000
ext 5792

Sittingbourne Orthoptic Clinic

 01795 418300
ext 2015

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you would like to raise any concerns, make comments and suggestions or require information on Trust services, you can contact **PALS**. Office opening times are Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm. Both offices offer a 24 hour answering machine. Messages will be responded to within one working day, so please do leave a contact number.

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