



eyelid surgery

The periorbital region (the area around the eyes) is one of the key facial expressive areas. Unfortunately, there are numerous environmental and hereditary factors acting over time which cause the very thin tissues of the eyelids to become stretched and slack. As such, this is one of the first regions to show the signs of ageing and contributes to a prematurely aged or sad look. Thankfully, there is much a skilled Plastic Surgeon can do to reverse these changes which occur with the passage of time. Rejuvenation of the eyelids (blepharoplasty) is one of the most common outpatient cosmetic surgery procedures performed today.

Q & As about Blepharoplasty

WHO IS BEST SUITED FOR THIS SURGERY?

Generally speaking, anyone who is unhappy with the appearance of their periorbital region may be a candidate for surgery. Those who will benefit from this most are those who have obvious saggy upper eyelids giving them an old or tired appearance. Occasionally the upper eyelid skin can become so droopy that the visual field can be obstructed. Those who have puffiness, bags or fine wrinkles of the lower eyelids can also benefit from blepharoplasty to rejuvenate the periorbital region. Private

insurance companies recognise the disability that severe cases of upper lid excess causes and it is wise to check to see if your policy covers you for such surgery.

WHAT WILL THE CONSULTATION INVOLVE?

The initial consultation is half an hour long in order that a full assessment and discussion can occur within a relaxed time frame. A thorough history is taken which will give you ample opportunity to describe your reasons for wanting the surgery and any concerns you may have.

Other health issues are explored to ensure your safety throughout the process. Specific enquiry will be made about diabetes and thyroid disease. Examination of the eyes and periorbital region will take several minutes as various functions of your eyes and surrounding structures are assessed. Measurements of critical landmarks and distances will be taken in addition to clinical photographs.

A second consultation takes place a week or two before the planned surgery date where any further questions may be answered and the surgery discussed for a second time.

AM I AWAKE OR ASLEEP WHEN THE OPERATION TAKES PLACE?

This surgery lends itself well to "twilight anaesthesia" which can take many forms. Essentially, you are sedated via an intravenous drip while the operation happens under local anaesthetic (by injections). You are therefore conscious but drowsy during the procedure. You will be monitored throughout the operation. The amount of sedation used depends on your requirements and can be increased or reversed at any time. The surgery can also be done under local anaesthetic alone or a full general anaesthetic at your request. Most people prefer the full anaesthetic for operations on all four lids at once (quad blepharoplasty).

Throughout their training, attention to detail, soft tissue handling, precision and aesthetic ideals are instilled into the trainees ... These same skills and exacting technique are utilised when operating on the delicate tissues about the eye to minimise complications, hasten healing and allow a more predictable result.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE OPERATION?

After satisfactory sedation has been achieved, the surgeon carefully marks out the proposed skin incisions and then infiltrates with local anaesthetic. The surgery involves excision of the skin and sometimes the underlying muscle. Following this, the fat beneath is assessed and small amounts of this may be removed. Generally speaking, this fat is preserved or repositioned rather than resected as was the practice a decade or more ago. The skin is closed with a fine removable nylon suture.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN UPPER AND LOWER LID SURGERY?

Rejuvenation of the lower lid is a much more exacting procedure and is technically more challenging than upper lid blepharoplasty. The dissection is more extensive and as a result of this the lower lid can remain swollen for some

weeks following the surgery. A recognised complication of lower lid surgery can result from over-resection of skin. This can lead to a contracted lower lid where the white of the eye (sclera) is visible beneath the cornea. A well trained surgeon assesses this pre-operatively and will undertake judicious skin resection in order to avoid this potential problem.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER THE OPERATION?

The upper lid in particular has very thin skin and can swell and become bruised following surgery. For this reason surgeons recommend cold packs for the first 48-72 hours post-operatively. Any bruising is usually mild and gradually fades to a yellowish tinge over the first week to ten days as the pigments in the bruise break down. The sutures are removed at 5 days. You may need to wear dark glasses for the first week or two which will help protect from the sunlight and also disguise any swelling or bruising. Make up and contact lenses can be worn at ten days to two weeks. It will take a full 6-12 weeks for the eyes to settle completely following eyelid surgery.

WHY SHOULD I ASK FOR A PLASTIC SURGEON TO DO MY OPERATION?

Your Plastic Surgeon will have undergone sixteen years of training, six of which (at least) have been under the direct supervision of fully qualified senior plastic surgeons in order to gain the formal qualification FRACS (Plast.) Not only are plastic surgeons trained to undertake cosmetic eyelid surgery, they are also capable of repairing other defects resulting from lacerations, burns, fractures, tumours and a variety of other conditions. Throughout their training, attention to detail, soft tissue handling, precision and aesthetic ideals are instilled into the trainees by senior surgeons. These same skills and exacting technique are utilised when operating on the delicate tissues about the eye to minimise complications, hasten healing and allow a more predictable result.

WHAT OTHER QUALIFICATIONS SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Those plastic surgeons who focus on cosmetic surgery and have a passion for this sub-specialty area can be elected to memberships in various organisations such as the New Zealand Foundation for Cosmetic Plastic Surgery, ASAPS (Australasian Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery) and ISAPS (International Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery). Prerequisite qualifications for membership to these groups include FRACS (Plast.), overseas Fellowship training in Cosmetic Surgery and a significant component of Cosmetic Surgery in their day to day practice. If your surgeon is a member of the above groups you can be sure they have the necessary skills, experience and backing to provide you with an optimal outcome.

eyesWide Open



"I am extremely happy with how my eyes look now. I can wear mascara without it going onto my eyelids, I can put eyeliner on and it doesn't disappear under a whole lot of excess skin."

The eyes are the first facial feature people observe and unfortunately they are also one of the first to show the signs of ageing. Ageing is an irreversible, relentless process of tissue degeneration resulting in loss of elasticity and stretching of skin

Whilst the eyes themselves are expressionless, the eyelids are very important indicators of our emotions. When heavy and baggy they portray a tired look; if hooded with loose skin, an aged look; if elongated and almond shaped with a smooth contour, a fresh youthful look.

As a teen, DK begun to notice that one of her eyelids had a slight droop. Over time, this became worse with both eyelids eventually becoming hooded, although one was noticeably worse. By the time she was 41, DK decided that she had put up with her condition for long enough and made the decision to have eyelid surgery, also known as Blepharoplasty, with surgeon Dr Murray Beagley. DK tells us more about her surgery.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO HAVE EYELID SURGERY?

I am an active, fit and healthy person. I felt my droopy eyelids made me look tired and old.

WAS THE DECISION TO HAVE SURGERY A DIFFICULT ONE?

Even though I had thought about this surgery for years, I did consider at length all the pros and cons. I was

worried about looking different, perhaps I would go from no eyelids to huge eyelids – and end up not looking like me! I wanted a natural look and symmetry to my eyelids. After talking these concerns through with my surgeon, I felt I just had to go for it.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR SURGEON?

To be honest, finding a good surgeon is not that easy. How do you know who is good unless you're talking about plastic surgery with people – which is not really something you do. As it was, I just happened to be in a café and came across an article that caught my attention in a plastic surgery magazine. I researched the surgery centre and also read up about all their surgeons before I went in for my appointment. For me it was important to know my surgeon's background, his training and what he specialized in; and also that the centre itself belonged to the NZ Foundation for Cosmetic Plastic Surgery.

HOW LONG DID THE SURGERY TAKE?

The surgery was a complete breeze, I couldn't believe how straightforward it was. I opted for IV sedation rather than a general anesthetic. I felt that recovery would be faster and it was the cheaper option. Plus, I told my surgeon I wanted to keep an eye on him through the surgery! I have to admit I was slightly nervous about being awake through the operation, however it was, dare I say, easy! Surgery took around an hour. I was in no pain and could talk to my surgeon throughout – even making jokes about his choice of music which was playing!

WAS IT PAINFUL AFTERWARDS?

After surgery I did not have a lot of pain. The main issue was swollen, hot eyelids. I kept eye pads soaking in very cold water in the fridge and put these over my eyes whenever I needed, plus took panadol regularly for a few days.

HOW LONG DID THE HEALING PROCESS TAKE?

The healing process is remarkably quick. My stitches were taken out after a week and I was playing sport and going to the gym after 6 weeks. The swelling of the eyelids and redness of the incision site does take a while to disappear – more like 12 weeks or so.

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE RESULTS?

I am extremely happy with how my eyes look now. I can wear mascara without it going onto my eyelids, I can put eyeliner on and it doesn't disappear under a whole lot of excess skin. My surgeon did a fantastic job and I think it is very natural. I look in the mirror and my eyes are finally how I have always dreamed them to be.



Dr Murray Beagley is a Remuera based Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon with a fellowship in Plastic Surgery from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS). He is an active member of The NZ Foundation for Cosmetic Surgery and both the Australasian and International Societies for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. He is currently the Supervisor of Advanced Surgical Training in plastic surgery for the Auckland region and together with a national panel of four is responsible for selecting intending plastic surgeons for future training.

Auckland Plastic Surgical Centre
Suite 6, 9 St Marks Rd,
Remuera, Auckland
09 529 2029
www.cosmeticsurgeon.org.nz