

ECTROPION REPAIR- PATIENT INFORMATION

What is an ectropion?

An ectropion is the term used to describe the lower eyelid turning outwards and drooping away from the eye. A lower eyelid ectropion is much more common in the elderly and may or may not affect the whole eyelid. It may occur as a result of previous surgery to the face caused by scarring.



What are the symptoms of ectropion?

1. Watery eyes.

This is the most common symptom of ectropion. When the lower eyelid punctum (the tear drainage hole in the inner aspect of the eyelid) no longer sits against the surface of the eye, tear drainage from the eye is reduced.

2. Irritable, red and sore eyes

In the absence of full eyelid closure and incomplete tear drainage, lubrication of the ocular surface can be compromised, leading to uncomfortable, red eyes, or recurrent eye infections (conjunctivitis). If the tear duct is damaged as well, there is a chance the patient may have persistent watery eyes, for which further surgery may be required.

What is the cause of ectropion?

The commonest cause of ectropion is general laxity of the tissues around the eye and laxity of the tendons in the inner and outer corners of the eyelids. Other disorders, such as lower eyelid trauma, contracture (scarring) of the lower eyelid e.g. following shingles, or certain skin disorders e.g. allergic dermatitis, post surgery may also cause an ectropion.

Finally, the strength and tone of the eyelids is maintained by the facial nerve, and impairment of this nerve (such as occurs in a Bell's palsy or facial palsy) may lead to laxity of the eyelid and a secondary ectropion.

Can ectropion affect the eye, or eyesight?

As the function of the lower eyelid is to protect the eye and to lead the tears into the inner corner of the eye, where they are drained away, a lower lid ectropion can result in exposure of the lower surface of the eye, in addition to watering of the eye. Rarely, untreated ectropion can lead to corneal exposure and corneal infection. This can then pose a risk to vision.

Treatment

The management of an ectropion depends on the underlying cause. Frequently, an operation is required in which the lower eyelid is tightened at the outer corner of the eyelids. This can be done in theatre under a local anaesthetic, taking about 45- 60 minutes. More complex cases (including those where there has been previous injury, or surgery, or a facial palsy) may require the addition of a sedative for more extensive surgery.

Pre-operative advice

Two weeks before surgery patients should liaise with their GP to discontinue any medications that may increase the risk of bleeding: such as Aspirin, Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Rivoroxiban and non-steroid anti-inflammatory agents.

Post-Operative Care

Following surgery, the eye is usually padded overnight to reduce swelling, and antibiotic drops or an ointment are prescribed. A review in clinic is organised for a week or two later to check on the position of the eyelid and to remove any stitches, if required.