

Information for Patients

Enucleation (removal of the eye) Before and after your surgery

What is an enucleation?

An enucleation is a surgical procedure to remove an eye and will normally be performed under a general anaesthetic.

Help during this time

Different individuals require removal of the eye for different reasons. For some patients removal of the eye is at the end of a long period of treatment and their eye has become painful and unsightly. For these patients enucleation of the eye is like the removal of a bad tooth and is seen as relief.

In contrast, for other patients removal of the eye can be necessary because of trauma, cancer or other more acute reasons and this might come as a shock. For these patients it can be difficult to cope with this sudden and dramatic news, especially if the eye to be removed had good sight.

The oculoplastic team are trained to help patients during this time and they can provide the opportunity to talk through the issues and provide support. It might be possible to refer to other supportive bodies, should the need arise.

Enucleation surgery

Not everyone will want to know the details of enucleation surgery, but the key part of the surgery is that when the eye is removed a spherical implant is used to fill the space. The implant can be made of plastic or hydroxyapatite.

The decision as to which implant will be used will be taken by the surgical team and this will be discussed with you.

What is a hydroxyapatite implant?

The hydroxyapatite implant or HAI is a spherical implant used to replace the volume lost when an eye is removed. It is made from coral (or a man-made equivalent), resembles human bone and will not easily be rejected by the body. The implant is full of tiny interconnecting tunnels through which blood vessels and tissues of the socket can grow. During the operation the muscles that allow the eye to move are attached to the HAI so that eventually when the artificial eye is fitted it will have some movement, although this might be limited in some circumstances.

Will the operation be painful?

There will inevitably be some discomfort. A few patients will experience some pain after the first 24 – 48 hours. However, a minority of patients can experience more severe and prolonged pain. The pain is normally controlled with simple pain relief medication but stronger pain relief medication can also be provided if needed. The pain is usually associated with eye movement. This can be minimised by moving the head and limiting eye movements. Using a few pillows to elevate your head at night can also help to reduce pain.

Are there any risks involved with this operation?

There are some risks associated with anaesthesia which are common to all operations. Serious complications are very rare. The main complications associated with this type of surgery include the risk of infection, bleeding and breakdown of the wound. Such complications are, however, rarely encountered.

How long will I be in hospital?

Usually patients are admitted on the day of surgery and discharged home the following day. If the effects of the general anaesthetic are causing nausea and vomiting a further night's stay might be advised.

How long will the dressings stay in place?

After the operation you will be required to wear an eye pad and bandage for one week. This helps to reduce the swelling caused by surgery. The dressing can either be removed by yourself at home after one week or if you wish it can be organised for you to return to the outpatients department for the dressing to be removed.

At the time of surgery your eyelids could be stitched together. This is to keep any swelling under control. This single stitch will be removed in clinic at week 2 or 3 following your operation. When you remove the dressing for the first time there might be some swelling of the eyelids – this is usually a ‘watery’ swelling where the tissues have become waterlogged and this is known as oedema. This is normal and can take several weeks to subside. You might also see two small plastic clear tubes on your eyelids. This is where the eyelid stitch is placed and the small tubes are there to protect your eyelids. These will be removed with the stitch in 2-3 weeks following surgery.

A small clear plastic shell called a conformer is inserted behind your eyelids at the time of surgery. The conformer is used to reduce contraction and scarring of the socket, as well as making the socket more comfortable. It also gives the eyelids a more natural shape.

Immediate post-operative care

Following enucleation surgery, you will be given pain relief medication (analgesics) to help control any pain. You will also be given oral antibiotics to take for one week to help reduce the risk of infection.

Although very rare you will need to be vigilant of any signs of infection. These include:

- Sudden onset of pain
- Redness in the eyelids or surrounding skin
- Swelling that looks ‘angry’ and red
- Any discharge
- General feeling unwell, raised temperature

How long will it be before I get my artificial eye?

The socket will require time to heal. If all is well after 8 weeks the ocularist can begin to make your artificial eye. Your artificial eye will be made and fitted by the ocularist in the Ocular Prosthetic Department. The ocularist will advise you on the time scale for this, however, please note that this process could take longer depending on your progress and the demands on the service.

Before your operation the ocularist will try to meet with you and explain the process involved in making the artificial eye and answer any outstanding questions that you might have. If you have any problems or questions the ocularist can be contacted on **(0161) 276 5540 Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm.**

When can I return to work?

Your return to work will depend largely on how you feel and the type of work you do. The oculoplastic team will be happy to discuss this with you. Although we do recommend that during the immediate recovery period, you refrain from heavy duties, (e.g. gardening).

If you have any questions or concerns about any of this information please telephone the hospital switchboard on **(0161) 276 1234** and ask them to bleep the Oculoplastic Nurse Practitioner on 5235 or 5605 **Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm** or Ward 55 on **(0161) 276 5512 (24 hours every day).**