

Detailed Post-Operative Care Instructions following Eyelid Surgery

Your recovery is **your** responsibility. How well and how quickly you recover depends largely upon how well you follow these instructions.

The Eye Ointment

When you leave our office, you may have trouble closing your eyes because the anesthetic injections temporarily weaken the eyelid closing muscles. This may cause your eyes to dry, so we put ointment in your eyes to keep them lubricated, but only on the day of surgery. A tiny bit of ointment every couple of hours goes a long way, since your eyes will be mostly closed while you are applying cold compresses as much as possible during the first 48 hours while awake. **Audio books** are a good idea during this time. The ointment hangs out on your eye surface, so don't be surprised if your vision is slightly blurred for several days. On the day following your surgery, your eyelid closure should already be about 80% back to normal, so you will probably not need to put more ointment **IN** your eyes; however, you should apply the ointment **on** your eyelid stitches three times a day (morning, noon, and night) every day until you return to our office. To apply the ointment, squeeze a tiny amount (about 2 pin heads' worth) onto a clean finger. Then, starting by the nose, run your finger along the suture line to the end. Repeat this for each eyelid that has been operated. In the lower eyelids, the stitch line is directly beneath the eyelashes. Don't be surprised if your eyelids are a little numb. You may have steri-strip tapes on your eyelids. The ointment will pass right through this tape.

The Cold Compresses

It is very important to apply cold compresses continuously while awake during the first 48 hours after your surgery. We want a gentle chill. If the compress is uncomfortably cold, then it is too cold. Get 4 - 5 bags of frozen peas ready before your surgery. Get the small, non-pleated snack bags (around 5 inches tall and 10 inches long) from the frozen food section in the grocery. Number the bags sequentially with a marking pen, poke a couple of holes in the bags with a safety pin, express all the air, and then place the bags in your freezer.

Fill a large serving or salad bowl with ice cubes and water and put in a couple of washcloths. Take out one washcloth, wring it out well, wrap it around your first bag of peas. With your first two fingers acting in a scissors-type movement, divide the bag of peas in half, so that the peas fall to either side of a thin bridge of plastic. Drape the compress over your nose, so that the sections with the peas sit on your eyes, not the bridge of your nose. The peas should keep the washcloth cool for 15-30 minutes.

When the cloth starts to warm, get the next sequentially numbered pea bag and wrap it with the other already chilled washcloth. A kitchen timer can be helpful to remind you when to change the compresses.

Although the cold compresses help to minimize bruising and swelling, expect your eyes to be more bruised and swollen the first two mornings when you awaken.

The Warm Compresses

Pour 2 cups of long grain, uncooked rice into a tall drinking glass. If you feel inclined, you can add lavender flowers or dried peppermint leaves. Slip a white athletic sock that is at least 80% cotton over the top of the glass. Flip the glass and sock over to fill the sock. Tie the sock closed with a ribbon or string, leaving a little "air space" along with the rice. Microwave the sock and rice for roughly a minute on high. The exact duration will depend upon the wattage of your microwave. When you remove the sock, roll and swirl it between your hands. The rice at the core will be hotter than that at the periphery, so you want to be sure to mix it well before testing it for temperature on your wrist. It should be hot, but not burning hot. Put the sock in a plastic bag, and then put the sock and bag over a tap-water-hot facecloth over your eyes. The "air space" in the sock should drape across your nose, so that there is a cup of rice lying as a "patty" over each eye. The rice is a heat source to keep the wet facecloth hot for about 10 minutes. The hot compresses may increase swelling, especially the first day, but they decrease bruising, and that is more important. If you expose your bruises to UV light (outdoor sunlight) or let the bruises stay too long untreated, they may remain for many weeks. So, take the warm compresses seriously. It is a good idea to have two rice-filled socks, if you have one alone and heat it too frequently, the rice may start to dry out and burn. Conveniently, socks are usually sold in pairs.

You will continue warm compresses about once an hour every day (8-10/day) until all of the bruising is gone. By the third day of warm compresses, you should notice that the bruising is 50% better each day. Your bruising will slowly change from black to reddish/purple to green and then to yellow before totally vanishing. It takes time. Be patient. Be consistent – you will get there. Don't worry about one eye being more bruised or swollen than the other, or one eye taking longer to resolve than the other. It is more common for the two eyes to heal at different rates than it is for them to heal at the same rate.

We will see you in 7 - 8 days after your surgery to remove any permanent sutures and to be sure you are healing correctly. We can usually tell if you are compliant in using your peas and socks, so do your homework and come in and show us your progress!

If you have questions, don't hesitate to call us. Our physicians are on call 24 hours a day. Or, search for answers on our website. We have done this literally tens of thousands of times, but this is probably your first time. Don't hesitate to get your questions answered.