



Open Your Eyes

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Blepharoplasty Removes the “Droop” That Can Block Vision

There was a time when cosmetic eye surgery was considered a discussion taboo – a “did she or didn’t she?” conversation that took place in whispered tones.

Fortunately, those days are over. Today, “eye lift” surgeries (known medically as a Blepharoplasty) are commonplace for both women *and* men. In fact, the surgery ranks in the top five cosmetic surgeries performed in the United States*, and not just for cosmetic reasons.

The Eyes Have It

As people age, the tender skin on the eyelid, and just below the eye, are some of the first areas on the face to loosen and wrinkle. Many patients believe this makes them look tired and older than their age – both valid reasons for having the surgery. But, for a percentage of patients, there is a legitimate medical condition which needs to be corrected, which is equally, if not more, important.

This medical condition is called “ptosis” – drooping eyelids that hang very low and block vision. Ptosis is caused by nerve damage or poor muscle tone in the eye lid. The eyelid starts to obscure the patient’s peripheral (side) vision, and in extreme cases, forward vision.

Patients with these issues, who have this surgery, comment time and again that they feel they are ‘opening their eyes for the first time. For many it has been years since they have seen correctly.

The surgery can also reduce “bags” under the eyes and correct drooping eyelashes, which can also impair vision.

What to Expect

During a Blepharoplasty, the surgeon removes excess skin, fat and muscle from upper and/or lower eyelids. To do this, the surgeon makes an incision along the creases of the upper eyelid and, if needed, the outer lower rim; depending on need, the incision may run the length of the lid. Once the incisions are made, fatty tissue, excess muscle, and skin are removed and then the incisions closed.

The whole procedure takes about an hour and is considered an outpatient surgery. Blepharoplasty is usually performed under local anesthesia.

When the surgery is completed, the eyes are lubricated and the patient discharged. The surgeon will prescribe an antibiotic (to ward off infection) and oral pain medication. The patient is instructed on how to clean the eyes, lubricate them with eye drops and treat them during healing. Restrictions are few, although patients should not swim until the sutures are removed a week after the surgery. Both sun block and sunglasses will be required for several weeks.

Most patients have few or no issues, although some report bruising, itchy and/or watery eyes, dry eyes, light sensitivity, swelling, blurred or double vision during the first few days. Minor scarring is also occasionally reported.

To learn whether Blepharoplasty is right for you, review the checklist in the side bar; then make an appointment with an eye surgeon in your area.

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Dr. Jason Tu is a board certified ophthalmologist who treats a wide range of ocular issues. He performs Blepharoplasty, and other eye lid procedures, at the Azar Eye Institute in Salisbury, MD.

How to Know if Blepharoplasty is for You ... and Your Doctor

According to the American Association for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, you may be a good candidate for an eye lift if you have any one or more of the following...

- Excess skin obscuring the natural fold of the upper eyelids.
- Loose skin hanging down from the upper eyelids, perhaps impairing vision.
- A puffy appearance to the upper eyelids, making the eyes look tired.
- Excess skin and fine, “crepe paper type” wrinkles of the lower eyelids.
- Bags and dark circles under the eyes.
- Lower eyelid droopiness.

To match your needs with the right surgeon, make sure the doctor...

- Is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS) or equivalent peer review organization, in the respective country of an international member.
- Qualifies for privileges to perform cosmetic plastic surgery in an accredited surgical facility.
- Has experience in a wide range of cosmetic and eye care procedures.