

## Surgical correction of a squint (children)

### What is a squint?

Squint is a condition when the eyes are not straight, the muscles moving the eyes are not balanced correctly. Usually one eye appears straight while the other is turned in or out.

### The surgical correction of squint

Surgery adjusts the direction of the eyes to a more straight-ahead position. Some muscles may be weakened and some strengthened in order to achieve this. As a squint is an imbalance between both eyes, the actual muscles chosen to be operated on will be decided upon according to the type of squint. Also surgery may not necessarily be carried out on the squinting eye.

The six muscles for each eye are attached to the outside of the eyeball. There is a direct connection to the brain from each eye so this means that the eye cannot be 'taken out' during surgery. This is a common misconception.

It is essential that glasses (if required) and/or patching are worn as directed by the Orthoptist. Surgery may have to be postponed if this has not been carried out, as the result may not be as hoped.

### Risks

- Squint surgery is generally a very safe procedure. There is a small risk of either under correction or over correction of the squint. Therefore in some cases further treatment may be needed.
- Your child may notice double vision after surgery as their brain adjusts to the new position of their eyes. This is normal and generally settles within a few days.
- Some patients might have a mild allergic reaction to the drops given after the operation. This can cause itching/irritation and redness of the eye. An infection or swelling may develop around the stitches. This is more likely to happen if your child goes swimming within the first four weeks after surgery.
- Any redness and scarring of the conjunctiva (the white of the eye) tends to fade after three months but occasionally visible scars will remain, especially in a repeat operation.
- The operation is carried out under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about an hour. With any general anaesthetic there is a small but potentially serious risk.

### Benefits

Generally the surgery will improve visual alignment i.e. make eyes straighter. It may also help to improve unusual head positions or reduce/get rid of double vision. If glasses are worn the aim is to straighten the eye WITH the glasses, there may still be a small remaining squint without glasses.

### The day of the operation

The operation is usually performed in a morning and you will be asked to come in early. It is very important that your child does not have anything to eat for 6 hours before their admission time. They may drink clear fluids (water or squash) up to 1 hour before their admission time. Whilst the surgery is usually about an hour long, the overall time spent in the Day Surgery Unit will be half a day. This is in order to allow for recovery from the anaesthetic.

### Your post-operative appointment

An appointment will be made to see the Orthoptist and consultant 7 to 10 days after the operation. It is most important that every effort is made to attend.

If you have any worries please do not hesitate to telephone us.

### Post-operative advice

- Drops/ointment will be given on discharge from hospital. It is very important that these are used regularly and according to the instructions given. The eye/s will look red at the site of the operation, but this will quickly settle. The stitches used will dissolve, and they may cause some discomfort and irritation. This can be greatly helped by bathing with cool boiled water and clean cotton wool. General painkillers suitable for children may be used if necessary.
- Children are advised to have one week away from school and not to go swimming for four weeks so as to avoid the danger of infection.
- Glasses must be worn immediately after the operation unless otherwise instructed. Patching will be stopped for a short time after the operation.

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