

# Child Strabismus Surgery Operation on the Eye Muscles

Information for parents, relatives and carers



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## Introduction

Strabismus is the abnormal alignment of one or both eyes. The eyes may turn inward or outward from the nose, and or there may be a vertical or twisting misalignment. The condition is commonly called a squint. Surgery can be performed on the eye muscles to correct this problem.

You are in the hospital from four to six hours after which time you can take your child home.

This leaflet explains a little about what will happen before, during and after your child's surgery in the Day Unit and tries to answer some of the questions you may have.

The doctors and nurses are there to help your child and you. They will always make time to listen to you and answer your questions. If you do not fully understand anything, please ask the staff in the Day Unit to help you when you come to the Day Unit.

## What happens when we arrive at the Day Unit?

The nurses introduce themselves to you and explain what will happen during your visit. Information that should have been obtained in the clinic, however if you have any further questions, now is the time to ask.

If you have not already been asked (this has not already been done) talk to you about the surgery.

He or she will check you:

- You will be given an anaesthetic,
- Fully understand the risks and benefits,
- Are aware of the alternatives, and
- Agree to your child having the operation.

Please ask if there is anything you do not fully understand. If you have anything you are uncertain about.

## Can I stay with my child?

We encourage one parent to remain with their child throughout their stay in the Day Unit. One parent is asked to accompany the child to the anaesthetic room but will be asked to return to the ward once your child is asleep.

If your child becomes ill or cannot keep their appointment for any reason, please tell us as early as possible so that another patient can be offered treatment.

We will rearrange your appointment if necessary.

Our telephone number is 01904 725127 between 8am and 4.30pm. Outside these hours please leave a message on the answer machine and we will call you back.

## What happens before surgery?

If they are not wearing loose clothing, your child will be asked to change into their own pyjamas or a hospital gown. They will be taken to the operating theatre where their identity is checked as part of the safety procedures.

## What kind of anaesthetic will my child have?

Your child will have a general anaesthetic which means that they are asleep during the operation. The anaesthetist will speak to you before the operation to discuss any concerns you may have and to check when your child last had something to eat or drink.

## What usually happens during the operation?

When your child is asleep the surgeon rotates their eye a little to access the muscles. He or she uses stitches to strengthen or weaken the muscles so that the eye is held in its correct position.

Six muscles hold the eye in position. Depending on the complexity of the surgery, the operating time varies between 30 minutes and one and a half hours. The eye remains in its socket during the operation.

Local anaesthetic is usually applied to the eye at the end of the operation to reduce discomfort when your child wakes up.

## Are there any risks involved in having surgery to the eye muscles?

Sometimes it is impossible to adjust the eye muscles exactly in one operation. In about one in 10 cases, a further operation is required. Very rarely double vision is increased or a muscle can slip from its new position.

Most kinds of surgery carry a risk of infection. The risk associated with surgery to the eye muscles is very small.

A complication that results in permanent double vision or permanent reduced vision occurs in one in 2,400 operations.

## What are the benefits of surgery to the eye muscles?

Surgery to the eye muscles usually means that the eyes are aligned (straight), double vision is reduced, co-ordination of the eyes is improved and the field of vision is increased.

## What are the alternatives to surgery to the eye muscles?

Eye muscle injections or special lenses can help some patients.



## What happens after the operation?

After surgery your child is taken to the recovery area where a specialist nurse will check their progress. This may take 20-30 minutes. The surgeon will discuss your

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## Before you leave the Day Unit

A nurse will go through the discharge instructions with you. Usually a follow up appointment is arranged and the date discussed with you on the day of surgery. This is usually between one and three weeks later.

Please ask if you are unsure of any of the instructions.

## What happens when we get home?

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few days. The swelling may be worse on the first day,  
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way to reduce discomfort is to apply a clean ice pack or  
face flannel soaked in cold water to the eye(s), although  
few children will tolerate this for long. The redness can  
last between two weeks and two months.

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if their eyes are watery. If your child wears glasses it is  
usual that they will wear them afterwards. Ask the doctor  
about this if you are uncertain.

Pain killers (analgesia) may be required. Usually  
Paracetamol (Calpol) is all that is required, but you can  
also use brufen containing medication in addition.

## What about any stitches?

Usually the stitches are buried under the skin of your  
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stitches on the skin of the eye. These usually drop out  
after about two weeks. Rarely, stitches do not drop out  
and have to be removed in the eye clinic.

## When can my child return to their normal activities?

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you go home, although they should not swim for two to four weeks following their operation or until the redness clears. Your child can eat and drink again as soon as they feel ready. Children usually require up to one week off school to recover from their operation, but please feel free to send them to school after a few days if you feel they are ready.

## What should I do if I have any problems

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after going home?

Please telephone the Day Unit on 01904 726010 between 8am and 8pm. Outside these hours, please contact the Eye Ward on 01904 726064.

Contact us if the level of discomfort, degree of swelling or vision deteriorates over the first week.

# Useful telephone numbers

If your child cannot keep their appointment please phone: 01904 725127

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Between 8am and 8pm please phone: 01904 726010

After 8pm please phone: 01904 726064

## Your notes

Please use this space to make a note of any questions you have.

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## Important information before surgery

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surgery goes ahead by following these instructions:

- x You may know that it is risky to eat and drink before having a general anaesthetic for surgery. But it can also be undesirable to have an operation when you are thirsty.

The following instructions are provided to help you encourage your child to drink water, but not to eat for the correct time intervals.

### All children

Please ensure your child follows the four rules below:

- ™ Your child should have no food or cloudy drinks during the six hours before their admission.
- ™ Breast milk maybe taken up to four hours before their admission.
- ™ Your child should drink plenty of clear fluids (those you can see through) until two hours before their admission.
- ™ Your child should not have anything to eat or drink during the two hours before their admission.

x If your child has any inhalers, please bring them with you.

x Your child may bath or shower as usual before their appointment.

x Your child should wear loose clothing or you may bring clean nightclothes for them if you wish.

x Your child should not wear jewellery, make-up or nail varnish.

x Do bring something to help pass the time while you wait on the Day Unit, e.g. toys, books, magazines.

x Do arrange transport home. Car parking is limited at The York Hospital.

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## Tell us what you think

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact Mr R Taylor, Consultant Ophthalmologist, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725612.

## Teaching, Training and Research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of staff and improve health and healthcare in our community. Staff or students in training may attend consultations for this purpose. You can opt-out if you do not want trainees to attend. Staff may also ask you to be involved in our research.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Patients, relatives and carers sometimes need to turn to someone for help, advice or support. Our PALS team is here for you.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or via email at [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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