WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Blepharoplasty (Eyelid Surgery) Aftercare

Recovery guidelines for upper and/or lower eyelid surgery. Follow these instructions carefully for optimal healing. This online guide should be used alongside the official leaflet and the specific instructions given to you by your surgical team at Waterfront Private Hospital.

Typical recovery: 1–2 weeks initial recovery, 3–6 months for final results · Reviewed 4 July 2026 · Version 1.0

When to get help — your traffic light guide

RED

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have:

These can be life-threatening. Do not wait to call the hospital first.

- Sudden loss of vision or severe eye pain
- Hard, painful swelling spreading rapidly
- Bleeding that won't stop after 10 minutes of pressure
- Chest pain or difficulty breathing (blood clot signs)
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

Contact us now — do not wait — if you have:

- Temperature over 38°C with discharge from wounds

Office hours (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm): 0131 376 3785

Evenings and weekends during your early recovery: Out-of-Hours Nurse Advice Line 07405322689 — our nurse can advise you, contact your surgeon, or direct you to NHS services.

After your early recovery period: call the hospital in office hours, or NHS 24 on 111.

Had your surgery at Spire Shawfair Park (overnight stay)? Contact Spire directly using the number on your discharge paperwork — not the Waterfront advice line.

GREEN

Tell us at your next appointment:

- Lower eyelid pulling away from eye

Anything else that is niggling or worrying you — no concern is too small. Mention it at your next appointment, or call us during office hours.

Related Information Leaflets

Separate leaflets about the procedure itself — not the aftercare instructions above. Tap a title to download, or find them all on your procedure page in the portal.

- Eyelid Reduction — Patient Leaflet (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/eyelid_reduction_patient_leaflet.pdf)

How to Use This Information

The advice below is based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery) aftercare leaflet. It is general guidance for the average patient and may be adapted by your consultant for your individual circumstances.

Always follow the specific instructions given to you on the day of your surgery and in your printed leaflet. If there is ever a difference, follow your consultant's written or verbal instructions and contact us for clarification.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Many patients find it comfortable to sleep with the head raised on a couple of extra pillows for the first week — it helps the swelling settle
- Cool compresses can be soothing in the first few days — 5–10 minutes at a time, as often as feels comfortable. They're optional: they mainly help comfort rather than speeding up swelling
- You can shower and bath from the day after surgery, but the eye area MUST be kept dry — the steristrips are often holding down the sutures and can come off if wet
- Clean eyes gently with cotton bud and cooled boiled water
- Apply the chloramphenicol ointment into the eye at bedtime (not on the suture line) — it protects the eye and stops it drying out overnight; usually 1 week is enough
- Take pain medications regularly - don't wait for pain
- Wear sunglasses when outdoors (UV protection and comfort)
- Attend all follow-up appointments (especially week 1 for stitch removal)
- Walk regularly to prevent blood clots
- Avoid rubbing or pulling eyes

Wound Care

- You can shower and bath, but keep the eye area completely dry — tilt your head back and avoid direct spray to the face
- Gently clean eyes with cotton bud and cooled boiled water
- Apply the prescribed chloramphenicol ointment into the eye at bedtime — it also stops the eye drying out overnight
- Week 1: Nurse appointment for painless stitch removal
- After stitch removal: Can wet the eye area gently
- Week 2 onwards: Can shower normally and wet wounds
- Begin gentle scar massage from week 2 (after nurse check)
- Apply plain moisturiser (E45) for scar care
- Lower eyelid scars: Very gentle upward strokes only
- Outer corners: May feel lumpy for months - gentle massage helps

Pain Management

- Take your painkillers as directed on their labels — every medicine you go home with is labelled with its dose and frequency, and your nurse will go through them with you before you leave. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together
- Take painkillers on schedule (don't wait for pain)
- Codeine: 1-2 tablets every 6 hours if prescribed, max 8 tablets daily
- Most pain subsides significantly after first week
- Swelling typically peaks at 48–72 hours, then gradually decreases
- Cool compresses are optional but can be soothing in the first few days

Activity Restrictions

- Days 1–3: Rest; showering is fine but keep the eye area dry
- Days 4–7: Continue keeping the eye area dry when washing; gentle walks with sunglasses
- Week 2: Can return to desk work, light household tasks
- Weeks 2–3: Light exercise (walking), avoid heavy lifting
- Weeks 3–4: Begin light gym exercise (start at 50% intensity)
- Week 2 onwards: Can apply makeup after 2 weeks (new eye products only)
- Weeks 2–3: Can wear contact lenses again (clean hands essential)
- Week 2: Can start driving when vision clear and comfortable

- Weeks 3–4: Can resume normal work (office-based)
- 3–4 weeks: Physical work - after heavy lifting restrictions lifted
- 4–6 weeks: Resume full gym exercise with surgeon approval
- About 4 weeks: Swimming, once the wounds are fully healed (goggles help if your eyes feel irritable)
- 2–3 weeks: Short flights acceptable (under 3 hours, compression socks)
- 3–4 weeks: Long-distance flights (over 3 hours, move regularly)
- Avoid bending over or straining for 4 weeks
- Never rub or pull eyes

Before You Leave the Hospital

- **Medications:** Pain medications collected. Take painkillers regularly for the first 3 days - don't wait for pain to develop.
- **Chloramphenicol eye ointment:** Apply into the eye at bedtime (not on the suture line). It protects the eye and stops it drying out overnight — usually 1 week is enough.
- **Gauze for compresses:** Gauze provided for wet compresses. Use cooled boiled water.
- **Compression stockings:** Given if applicable for DVT prevention (especially if general anaesthetic used).
- **Follow-up appointment:** Booked with nurse for days 6–7 for stitch removal.
- **Transport home:** A responsible adult must take you home and stay overnight.
- **Emergency numbers:** Saved to your phone.
- **Laxatives:** Provided if needed (prevents constipation from medications).

Recovery at a Glance

- **Days 1–2:** Significant swelling, black eyes possible. Rest; cool compresses if soothing; many patients prefer the head raised.
- **Days 3–4:** Swelling peaks, bruising spreads. Continue compresses, gentle cleaning.
- **Week 1:** Bruising yellowing, swelling reducing. Nurse appointment for stitch removal.
- **Week 2:** Most bruising fading, feeling better. Shower normally, light activities.
- **Weeks 3–4:** Near normal appearance. Resume exercise gradually.
- **Months 2–3:** Final healing and full activities.

Your Painkillers

Every medicine you go home with is clearly labelled with its dose and how often to take it, and your nurse will go through your painkillers with you before you leave.

Take them as directed on the label. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together. If your pain isn't controlled despite taking your painkillers as directed, contact us.

Scar Care and Massage

When to Start — Begin scar massage from **week 2**, after your nurse appointment confirms healing is progressing well.

Massage Technique

- Clean hands thoroughly
- Apply plain moisturiser (E45 or similar)
- Use fingertip in small circles along scar line
- Massage along entire scar line (including both upper and lower lids)
- Include outer corners where lumps may form
- Perform 2-3 times daily for 3 minutes
- **Special Areas**
- **Lower lid scars:** Very gentle upward strokes only - lower lids are delicate
- **Outer corners:** May feel lumpy for months - gentle massage helps break down tissue
- **Fat transfer sites:** Gently massage donor area (thigh/tummy) after 3 weeks
- **Scar Timeline**
- **3–6 months:** Pink/red appearance (longer if under 45 years old)
- **6–12 months:** Gradually fade to white
- **12 months:** Final result achieved - scars become much less noticeable

Lifestyle Guidelines

✓ **DO**

- Sleep propped up on extra pillows if comfortable
- Cool compresses if you find them soothing
- Walk regularly (prevents blood clots)
- Wear sunglasses outdoors (UV protection)

- Keep wounds clean and dry
- Take laxatives if constipated
- Attend all appointments
- Be patient with healing
- **✗ AVOID**
- Rubbing or pulling eyes
- Bending over or straining
- Heavy lifting for 4 weeks
- Smoking (delays healing)
- Alcohol while taking painkillers, and ideally while swelling is settling (first 1–2 weeks)
- Hot showers/baths (first week)
- Swimming until wounds are fully healed (about 4 weeks)
- Rushing back to activities

Return to Activities Timeline

- **Eye makeup:** 2 weeks — New products only
- **Contact lenses:** 2–3 weeks — Very clean hands
- **Driving:** 2 weeks — When vision clear and comfortable
- **Work (office):** 2 weeks — May need concealer for bruising
- **Work (physical):** 3–4 weeks — Avoid heavy lifting initially
- **Exercise (walking):** 1 week — Build up gradually
- **Exercise (gym):** 4–6 weeks — Start at 50% intensity
- **Swimming:** About 4 weeks — once wounds are fully healed; goggles help if eyes feel irritable
- **Flying (short):** 2–3 weeks — Under 3 hours, compression socks
- **Flying (long):** 3–4 weeks — Over 3 hours, move regularly

Blood Clot (DVT) Prevention

After general anaesthetic, you are at slightly higher risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT - blood clots). Reduce this risk by:

- **Walking regularly:** Get up and move around every few hours
- **Wearing compression stockings:** If provided, wear for 2 weeks as instructed
- **Staying hydrated:** Drink plenty of water
- **Avoiding long periods sitting:** Change position frequently

- **Seek immediate help (999 or A&E):** If you develop calf pain with swelling, chest pain, or shortness of breath - these could be signs of a blood clot.

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Early Recovery

Immediate post-surgery care and initial healing

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Significant swelling (eyes may swell shut)
- Black eyes appearance
- Blurred or double vision
- Light bleeding or oozing
- Tightness and discomfort
- If fat transfer: soreness at donor site (thigh/tummy)

CARE ROUTINE

- Cool compresses if soothing (optional — mainly for comfort)
- Keep your head comfortably raised when resting where you can
- Clean eyes gently with cotton bud and cooled boiled water
- Apply antibiotic ointment at bedtime
- Take pain medications regularly
- Walk around every few hours (prevents blood clots)
- No shower or bath - use wet wipes only
- Keep all stitches completely dry

COMFORT

- Take painkillers on schedule (don't wait for pain)
- Codeine 1-2 tablets every 6 hours if prescribed, max 8 tablets daily
- Cold compresses reduce swelling and discomfort

Days 4–7 — Improving Daily

Gradual reduction in swelling and discomfort

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Swelling starting to reduce
- Bruising spreading down face (gravity)
- Vision clearing
- Less pain, more tightness

- Mood may fluctuate (this is normal!)

CARE ROUTINE

- Can shower from neck down
- Cool compresses as often as feels comfortable (optional)
- Keep using antibiotic ointment nightly
- Gentle walks outside (wear sunglasses)
- Head raised when resting, if comfortable
- Nurse appointment for stitch removal (typically days 6–7)
- Stitches removed (painless procedure)
- Wounds examined and lower eyelid position checked

COMFORT

- Pain should be significantly reduced
- May reduce to paracetamol/ibuprofen only
- Continue medication as needed
- Less need for strong painkillers

Week 2 — Progressive Healing

Continued improvement with return to light activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Most bruising fading, yellowing appearance
- Swelling reducing significantly
- Vision returning to normal
- Eyes may feel dry or watery
- Scars still pink but fading

CARE ROUTINE

- Can shower and wet wounds
- Stop antibiotic ointment after 2 weeks
- Begin gentle scar massage (Week 2 onwards)
- Can use concealer makeup
- Return to desk work
- Start driving (if comfortable and vision clear)
- Light household activities

COMFORT

- Minimal pain medication needed
- Most discomfort resolved
- Continue gentle care routines

Weeks 3–4 — Near Normal Appearance

Most visible healing complete

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Most swelling resolved
- Bruising nearly gone
- Eyes may feel dry or watery
- Scars still pink but fading
- Eyes returning to normal function

CARE ROUTINE

- Begin light exercise (walking, light gym)
- Continue scar massage (2-3 times daily for 3 minutes)
- Apply moisturiser for scar care (E45 or similar)
- Avoid heavy lifting for 4 weeks total
- Can apply makeup normally (new products only for eyes)
- Can wear contact lenses again (very clean hands)
- Normal work routines

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full range of motion restored
- Occasional mild discomfort possible

Months 2–3 — Final Healing

Complete return to normal activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Final healing occurring
- Scars pink/red but progressively fading (longer if under 45)
- Complete return to normal vision
- Full appearance restoration

CARE ROUTINE

- Full activities including swimming (3 months post-op)
- Resume full exercise routine (gym, sports)
- Continue scar care with massages and sun protection
- Can return to all water activities
- Long-distance flying acceptable (3–4 weeks for flights over 3 hours)
- Massage fat transfer donor sites gently after 3 weeks

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full recovery achieved
- Contact team if any concerns arise

Month 3 - 12 — Final Result

Complete healing and scar maturation

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Final results visible
- Scars gradually fade to white
- Complete return to all activities
- Confident with appearance
- Scar maturation timeline: Pink/red for 3–6 months (longer if under 45), then gradually fading

CARE ROUTINE

- Scars fade progressively over 12 months
- Continue sun protection on scars
- All activities permitted
- Regular exercise including swimming
- Annual check-ups as recommended
- Final scar appearance at 12 months

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full recovery achieved
- Contact team if any concerns arise

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 (Days 6–7) - Nurse Appointment — Essential stitch removal and wound check appointment.

- Stitches removed (painless procedure)
- Wounds examined for proper healing
- Lower eyelid position checked
- Advice on scar massage techniques
- Questions answered about home care

Further nurse reviews — as needed — Some patients need further nurse reviews. If so, the nurses will arrange these with you and will discharge you from nurse-led care once they are happy your wounds have healed.

Around 6 months — surgeon review (final follow-up) — Your surgeon will usually see you at around 6 months to assess your final result. Your surgeon is always available to review you sooner if required, and in some circumstances may wish to see you before your final follow-up.

Your appointment schedule may vary. Always follow the specific dates and times given in your appointment card. Contact us if you need to reschedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

My eyes look completely swollen shut - is this normal?

Yes, severe swelling is common with combined surgery. As long as the swelling is soft (not hard), it will reduce over 3–5 days. This is completely normal.

When will I look presentable for work/social events?

Most patients feel comfortable in public with makeup after 2–3 weeks. Full healing takes 4–6 weeks. Bruising yellows and spreads down face (due to gravity) before fading.

My lower eyelid feels loose - should I worry?

Contact us for advice. We may recommend gentle massage exercises to help the lid tighten. This can improve with specific movements.

Why do my cheeks hurt if I had fat transfer?

The donor site (thigh or tummy) will be sore for 1–2 weeks. This is normal and improves quickly. Gentle massage after 3 weeks helps.

Can I cry or laugh?

Yes, but it may feel uncomfortable initially. Normal emotions won't harm your results. Be gentle with facial expressions for the first week.

When will the watering/dryness improve?

Eye irritation (dryness or watering) is common for 2–3 months. Use preservative-free artificial tear drops available from any pharmacy.

Is it normal to regret having surgery?

Mood changes are very common when swollen and bruised. You'll feel much better as healing progresses. Most patients are delighted with their results once swelling has resolved.

When can I wear eye makeup again?

You can use concealer makeup after 2 weeks. Use only new products on the eyes to avoid infection risk. Timelines here are a little longer than for upper-eyelid-only surgery because combined or lower-lid surgery involves more tissue healing.

How long will my scars be visible?

Scars are pink/red for 3–6 months (longer if under 45 years old). They gradually fade to white and become much less noticeable over 12 months with proper care and sun protection.

What about scar care and massage?

Start gentle scar massage from week 2. Use fingertips in small circles along the entire scar line, including outer corners. Apply plain moisturiser. Massage 2-3 times daily for 3 minutes. This helps fade scars faster.