

# Cosmetic Eyelid Surgery

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Research has shown that eyes and eyelids are the first thing that people notice about the face and that they are a central aspect of facial appearances. Given this, it is not surprising that eyelid surgery is the most commonly performed cosmetic surgery on the face.

## MOTIVATIONS

A patient's most common motivation for seeking cosmetic eyelid surgery is to achieve a younger, more rested appearance. Other common motivations for seeking eyelid surgery include bags, puffiness and dark circles around the eyes. Some Asian patients are born without a fold in the upper eyelid and have surgery to create that fold. In some patients, there is enough droopiness of the upper eyelid or excess skin that the lids block the peripheral vision and these patients may seek surgery to improve vision.

## UPPER EYELID SURGERY

There are many alterations that can occur in the upper eyelid as a result of heredity and/or aging. The first goal of the cosmetic eyelid surgeon is to listen to a patient's concerns about the appearance of the lids and identify the anatomical alterations that might be modified to improve upon those concerns.

For instance, bags in the upper eyelids can often be corrected by removing excess skin or fat from the upper lids (upper eyelid blepharoplasty surgery). Droopy upper eyelids can be corrected by tightening one of the two muscles that elevate the upper eyelid (ptosis surgery). When creating a fold in the Asian eyelid (Asian blepharoplasty surgery) it is important to realize that the anatomy of the Asian



Before cosmetic eyelid surgery the patient is motivated to look younger and more rested.

eyelid is different than the Caucasian eyelid. Asian patients who desire to have a fold made in the upper eyelid prefer to have the fold placed lower in the lid than Caucasians because this is the natural location of the Asian fold.

About half of patients who present, concerned with bags in the upper eyelids, have descent of the forehead and eyebrows, which causes a gathering of excess tissue in the upper eyelids. Just as one can't operate on an elbow to correct a problem with the wrist, one cannot operate on the eyelids to correct descent of the forehead. Patients with droopiness of the eyebrows may benefit from elevation of the eyebrow performed through an incision in the upper eyelid (internal brow lift) or elevation of the forehead performed using an endoscope via incisions placed behind the hairline (endoscopic forehead lift). Many patients are bothered by the vertical lines that



After upper eyelid blepharoplasty, endoscopic forehead lift, and lower eyelid blepharoplasty surgery, the patient achieves a younger, more alert and rested appearance.

form between the eyebrows and these can be removed by weakening the corrugator muscles at the time of blepharoplasty surgery or endoscopic forehead lift surgery (corrugator resection).

## LOWER EYELID SURGERY

Patients who present considering lower eyelid surgery have a number of different concerns with the lower lids that include: fat bags, droopiness, skin texture changes, dark circles, excess skin and pigmentation changes. Each concern must be addressed in turn by the surgeon and corrected when possible.

Fat bags in the lower eyelids can be removed by making an invisible incision on the back side of the lower eyelid. This allows for exposure of the three fat pads in the lower lids. Historically, surgeons removed fat from the lower lids. In recent years, cosmetic surgeons have come to realize that loss of fat in the face

is an aging change. For most patients, I translocate the bags of fat into the hollow area in the lower lid instead of removing it (lower blepharoplasty with fat translocation). This procedure gets rid of the bag without contributing to the loss of facial fat associated with facial aging. By filling in the hollow area beneath the bag it also resolves or reduces the dark circle. Droopy lower eyelids can be tightened (lateral tarsal strip) and skin texture and skin pigment can be improved with a moderate depth chemical peel (TCA peel) or laser peel. Skin texture changes in the lower eyelids are common but it is not common to have extra skin that requires removal. In fact, removal of skin from the lower eyelids, resulting in retraction of the lower eyelids and dry irritated eyes, is the most common complication of facial plastic surgery. By making incisions through the conjunctiva

on the back side of the eyelid, instead of the skin, this common complication can be avoided.

## RECUPERATION

Cosmetic eyelid surgery is typically performed in an office procedure room or outpatient surgery operating room. Discomfort after surgery is minimal and although patients are given narcotic pain pills, most do not feel a need to use them. The major hurdle to recovery is bruising and swelling, which are much improved a week after surgery, but take three weeks to resolve completely. Patients are asked to stay at home and rest with ice packs over the eyes on the day of surgery and two days afterwards. On the third day after surgery most patients can return to activities of daily living but will wear a pair of sunglasses in public for two to three weeks.

## SURGEONS

Many surgeons, physicians and even dentists perform some eyelid surgery. The most important issue is that the surgeon has training, experience, and understanding of the aesthetic nature of eyelid appearance and the normal physiological functions performed by the eyelids. The tolerance for error in eyelid surgery is tenfold less than in most whole body plastic surgery procedures. Given the delicate, highly organized nature of eyelid tissue it is imperative that nothing be modified or removed that results in an unnatural appearance or abnormal function of the eyelids. This is a critical issue because the most common serious complications of facial plastic surgery are those that result in pathological function and unnatural appearance of the eyelids. On average, ophthalmic plastic surgeons perform more cosmetic eyelid surgery per physician than any other subspecialty in medicine. ■



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