

Understanding squint surgery

This leaflet provides information on squint surgery. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact 020 7188 4299, and leave a message on our answer phone.

What is a squint?

A squint is a condition where the eyes are misaligned or crossed. One eye can turn in (convergent), out (divergent), up, or down. Squints can occur in approximately three out of 100 (3%) children.

How does a squint affect my child's eyes?

A squint may affect your child's eyes in the following ways;

1. reduced vision
2. headaches/eye strain
3. loss of ability to use the eyes as a pair
4. appearance and/or abnormal eye movements
5. double vision.

What is the treatment for a squint?

Treatment of your squint may involve some or all of the following;

- glasses
- patching
- exercises
- prisms
- Botox injections
- surgery

Surgery

The Orthoptist (a health professional trained in visual development and eye movement) and Ophthalmologist (a doctor trained in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases of the eye and visual system) advise when surgery is appropriate. It can take more than one operation before the eyes appear 'straight'. Surgery will be recommended if there is a chance of restoring your child's ability to use their eyes together or improving the appearance of the two eyes. Surgery can be carried out at any age.

Squint surgery will not reduce or improve vision. Some squint surgery can be carried out to improve eye movements.

What will the surgeon do?

The surgeon will open the eyelids whilst your child is asleep under general anaesthetic. The surgeon will not cut around the eye so there are no scars on the eyelids. On the white part of the eye (sclera) there is a layer like cling-film called the conjunctiva. When this is cut the surgeon can see the eye muscles. These muscles control the position and movement of the eyes. The surgeon will move these muscles to make them stronger or weaker. This will change the position of the eyes to appear 'straighter' and in some cases restore more normal movement of the eyes.

Will my child be asleep for the surgery?

Squint surgery is usually carried out under a general anaesthetic, which means your child is asleep for the surgery.

Will my child have my eyes padded?

Your child will usually wake up with one eye pad on and then taken off almost immediately.

What are the possible side effects?

Side effects with squint surgery are very rare. All procedures with an anaesthetic carry a slight risk. There is very little risk to your child's vision as the surgeon does not go inside the eye itself. Some patients require more than one operation before their eyes appear straight.

How long will my child be in hospital?

Most squint surgery is done as a day case operation. If children need to stay in hospital there are provisions for a parent or carer to stay with them. This will be discussed with you in more detail if necessary.

Will it be painful after surgery?

Although the front of the eye has lots of nerve endings, the side of the eye where the muscles are has very few. Your child may only require some mild pain relief for 24 hours after the surgery.

What will I have to do after the surgery?

After the surgery your child will be given drops to go in the operated eye/eyes **four times** a day. This is an antibiotic and steroid drop that will soothe the eye and aid healing. In some children it can be impossible to put the drops in this often. We recommend putting the drops in children's eyes once they are asleep.

Sometimes after surgery the Orthoptist may change your child's glasses or give them exercises and they will tell you about this after the surgery.

We recommend that your child does not swim for at least two weeks after squint surgery, please ask your Ophthalmologist about contact lens wear and travelling after their surgery.

How much time should my child take off school?

We suggest that your child has about five days off school. This allows a few days rest to get over the effects of the anaesthetic.

Will my child have an appointment after the operation?

Yes. An appointment will be arranged 1-2 weeks after the operation to assess the alignment of the eyes and check that the eye is healing correctly.

How long will my child have to attend the hospital?

Although your child's eyes may appear straight after surgery it is vital that they attend regular follow-up appointments as they will still require close assessment of the squint and vision. Your child's eyes may change from year to year until fully developed.

Useful sources of information

www.squintclinic.com - the videos are very helpful
www.orthoptics.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the **Orthoptic department on 020 7188 4299**, and leave a message on our answer phone. We aim to get back to you within three working days. (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm).

Please contact the Doctor's secretary if you are worried about your eyes after the operation.
T: 0207 188 4334

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health. **w:** www.nhs.uk

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