WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Upper Eyelid Surgery (Upper Blepharoplasty) Aftercare

General recovery guidance for upper eyelid surgery based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written aftercare information. This online guide should be used alongside the official leaflet and the specific instructions given to you by your surgical team.

Typical recovery: 4 weeks for return to normal activities, 6–12 months for final scar appearance · Reviewed 10 November 2026 · Version 1.1

Having your surgery at Spire? Your nursing care after surgery, including wound checks and dressings, is at Spire. Please follow the discharge instructions Spire gives you, and contact Spire using the number on your discharge paperwork, not the Waterfront advice line. Your later follow-up is at Waterfront. The general recovery advice in this leaflet still applies.

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
- Severe eye pain not helped by painkillers
- Hard painful swelling getting worse
- Bleeding that won't stop after 10 minutes pressure
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

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

- Signs of infection (fever over 38°C with discharge)

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:

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 upper 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.

Note: This page is for upper eyelid surgery only. If you had combined upper and lower eyelid surgery (blepharoplasty), please refer to that specific aftercare guide.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Make sure you have your painkillers, the nurse looking after you will go through them with you
- Chloramphenicol eye ointment received
- Gauze for compresses collected
- Follow-up nurse appointment booked (days 6–7)
- Transport home arranged
- Emergency numbers saved

- Understand wound care instructions

Wound Care

- Clean eyelids gently with cotton bud and cooled boiled water daily
- Apply the chloramphenicol ointment into the eye at bedtime (not on the suture line), it protects the eye and stops it drying out overnight
- You can shower from the day after surgery, but keep your eyes out of the water for the first week while the skin strips are on; after that they can get wet
- Do not rub or touch eyes
- Stitches removed at week 1 nurse appointment
- After stitches removed, continue gentle cleaning
- Watch for signs of infection (yellow/green discharge)

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
- Chloramphenicol ointment: into the eye at bedtime, protects the eye and stops overnight drying; use it for 1 week
- Take with food if possible
- Avoid alcohol with painkillers

Activity Restrictions

- Eye makeup: 1 week (use new products to avoid infection)
- Driving: 1 week (when you can see clearly)
- Office work: 1 week (may still have visible bruising)
- Gentle exercise (walking, light activities): 2 weeks
- Full exercise: 4 weeks (build up gradually)
- Swimming: not for at least 6 weeks (goggles help if eyes feel irritable)
- Flying (short, under 3 hours): 1 week
- Flying (long, over 3 hours): 2–3 weeks (wear compression socks)
- No rubbing or touching eyes

- No bending over or straining for 2 to 3 weeks

Before You Leave the Hospital

- **Painkillers:** Make sure you have your painkillers before you leave, the nurse looking after you will go through them with you.
- **Eye Ointment:** Apply the chloramphenicol ointment into the eye at bedtime (not on the suture line). It protects the eye and stops it drying out overnight. Use it for 1 week.
- **Gauze and Compresses:** You will be given gauze for making cold compresses during recovery.
- **Follow-up appointment:** You will be given a card with details of your nurse appointment (days 6–7 for stitch removal) and contact details for the hospital if you have concerns once you get home.
- **Getting home safely:** You must have someone to take you home and **arrange safe transport**.

Medication Guide

- **Pain Relief Medications**
- Take with food if possible to avoid stomach upset
- **Eye Care Medication**
- **Chloramphenicol Eye Ointment:** A small amount inside the eye at bedtime only
- **Duration:** For 1 week after surgery
- **Application:** With a clean fingertip or cotton bud, apply a small amount inside the eye at night, not on the stitches
- This antibiotic ointment prevents infection and aids healing. Do not apply during the day as it may blur vision.

Eye Care Tips

- **Cold Compress Therapy (Days 1–7)**
- **Days 1–3:** Cool compresses can be soothing, 5–10 minutes at a time, as often as feels comfortable. They're optional
- **Days 4–7:** Cool compresses as often as feels comfortable, if you find them helpful
- **How to make compresses:** Wrap ice in clean gauze or use a cold damp cloth
- **Benefits:** Feels soothing and can ease discomfort in the first days
- **Cleaning Your Wounds**
- **Frequency:** Daily, preferably in the morning

- **Method:** Use a clean cotton bud and cooled boiled water
- **Technique:** Gently clean the eyelid, removing any ointment residue or discharge
- **After cleaning:** Pat dry gently with clean tissue
- **Sleeping Position**
- **First week:** Many patients find it comfortable to sleep slightly propped up (e.g. two pillows), it helps swelling drain
- **Benefits:** Reduces swelling and helps fluid drain away from eyes
- **Duration:** For the first week or so, stop when it no longer feels necessary
- **Showering and Water Exposure**
- **First week:** Shower is OK, but keep your eyes out of the water while the skin strips are on
- **After week 1:** Can shower normally and get the eyes wet
- **Baths:** Avoid soaking in baths for first week
- **Tip:** Tilt your head back or wear a headband to keep eyes dry
- **Dry Eyes**
- Dry eyes are common after upper eyelid surgery. To manage:
- Use preservative-free eye drops (available from any pharmacy)
- Apply drops 3-4 times daily as needed
- Blink frequently, especially when reading or watching screens
- Avoid direct air from fans, air conditioning, and heating
- Wear sunglasses to protect from wind and sun

Return to Activities Timeline

- **Eye Makeup**, 1 week, Use new products to avoid infection
- **Driving**, 1 week, When you can see clearly
- **Office Work**, 1 week, May still have visible bruising
- **Gentle Exercise (walking, light activities)**, 2 weeks, No strenuous activity
- **Full Exercise**, 4 weeks, Build up gradually
- **Swimming**, Not for at least 6 weeks; goggles help if eyes feel irritable
- **Flying (short)**, 1 week, Under 3 hours
- **Flying (long)**, 2–3 weeks, Over 3 hours, wear compression socks

✓ Do These Things

- Keep head elevated when sleeping
- Use cold compresses regularly (first week)

- Take painkillers as directed
- Attend follow-up appointments
- Clean eyes gently and regularly
- Rest and take it easy
- Wear sunglasses outdoors
- Follow specific instructions from your surgeon

✗ Avoid These Things

- Rubbing or touching eyes
- Getting stitches wet (first week)
- Bending over or straining (for 2 to 3 weeks)
- Smoking, vaping or any nicotine for at least 4 weeks after surgery (it delays healing)
- Alcohol with painkillers
- Swimming for at least 6 weeks
- Eye makeup for 1 week
- Scratching itchy stitches

Scar Care Guide

- **When to Start Scar Care**
- **Week 2 (after stitches are removed)** - Only start scar care after stitches have been removed and the wound is completely dry.
- **Your Scar Care Routine**
- **Step 1: Prepare**, Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
- **Step 2: Massage the Scar**
- Use plain moisturiser (E45 or similar)
- Gently massage along the scar line with your fingertip
- Use small circular motions
- Perform 2-3 times daily for 2 minutes
- **What to Expect**
- Scars may feel lumpy at first (this is normal)
- Redness fades over 3–6 months
- Final result visible at 6–12 months
- Continue massage for best results
- **Scar Healing Timeline**

- **Week 1:** Stitches removed, wound clean
- **Weeks 2–4:** Start scar massage, redness prominent
- **3 months:** Significant fading, still visible
- **6 months:** Much fainter, blends with skin
- **6–12 months:** Final appearance achieved

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Early Recovery

Immediate post-surgery care with cold compresses

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Mild swelling and some discomfort
- Some bruising starting to appear
- Slight oozing from wounds
- Blurry vision from ointment
- Tired heavy feeling in eyelids

CARE ROUTINE

- Cool compresses if soothing (optional, mainly for comfort)
- Sleep slightly propped up if comfortable
- Clean eyelids gently with cotton bud and cooled boiled water
- Apply antibiotic ointment at bedtime only
- Take painkillers regularly as directed

COMFORT

- Take paracetamol 2 tablets (1g) every 6 hours (max 8 tablets)
- Take ibuprofen 1-2 tablets (200-400mg) every 8 hours (max 6 tablets)
- Take with food if possible

Days 4–7 — Improving Daily

Swelling peaks then starts to reduce

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Swelling going down
- Bruising changing from purple to yellow
- Less discomfort
- Stitches may feel tight or itchy (don't scratch!)

CARE ROUTINE

- Cool compresses as often as feels comfortable (optional)
- Keep using ointment at night
- Can shower but keep your eyes out of the water while the skin strips are on
- Continue sleeping with head raised
- Prepare for Week 1 nurse appointment

COMFORT

- Continue regular painkillers as needed
- Pain should be decreasing significantly
- Most patients need less medication by day 7

Week 1 Nurse Appointment — Stitch Removal

Professional wound assessment and stitch removal

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Stitches removed (quick and painless)
- Wounds checked for healing progress
- Questions answered about care

CARE ROUTINE

- Attend nurse appointment (days 6–7)
- Stitches will be removed
- Wounds professionally assessed
- Receive advice on next steps

COMFORT

- Pain should be minimal by this point
- Minimal pain relief needed

Week 2 — Getting Back to Normal

Most bruising gone, returning to regular activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Most bruising gone
- Swelling significantly reduced
- Able to wear eye makeup
- Eyes feeling much closer to normal

CARE ROUTINE

- Can shower normally
- Stop the antibiotic ointment (1 week is enough)

- Can wear eye makeup (use new products to avoid infection)
- Return to work (office jobs)
- Start gentle scar massage

COMFORT

- No pain medication typically needed
- Comfortable with normal activities

Weeks 3–4 — Near Complete Healing

Resume all normal activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Near complete healing achieved
- Scars continuing to fade
- Eyes feeling completely normal
- Full range of motion restored

CARE ROUTINE

- Resume all normal activities
- Continue scar care with massage
- Can participate in all exercises
- Full driving and work activities
- Swimming fine from 6 weeks

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full normal functioning

Follow-Up Appointments

Days 6–7: Nurse Appointment (Stitch Removal) — Your stitches will be removed and your wounds will be checked for healing progress.

- Stitches removed (quick and painless procedure)
- Wounds checked for proper healing
- Any questions answered
- Advice on next steps in recovery

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

When will my eyes look normal again?

Most bruising and swelling will be gone by 2 weeks. You can return to social activities with makeup after 10–14 days. Final scar appearance continues to improve over 6–12 months.

Can I watch TV or use a computer?

Yes, you can watch TV and use a computer. Rest your eyes if they feel tired. The ointment may blur your vision at night, so avoid screens before bed.

Why do my eyes feel dry?

Dry eyes are common after eyelid surgery. Use preservative-free eye drops from the pharmacy to help. This usually improves within a few weeks.

When can I wear contact lenses?

Wait 2 weeks after surgery before wearing contact lenses. Make sure your hands are clean and be gentle when inserting them.

Is the tightness in my eyelid normal?

Yes, eyelid tightness is very normal and improves as swelling reduces and scars soften over the first month. This is a natural part of healing.

Can I dye my hair?

Wait 3 weeks before dyeing your hair. Avoid getting chemicals near your healing wounds. Use a professional if possible.

Why do my stitches feel tight or itchy?

This is normal as your eyes heal. Do not scratch or rub at the stitches. Stitches will be removed at your week 1 nurse appointment, which is painless.

What should I do about scars?

Start scar care from Week 2 after stitches are removed. Wash your hands, use plain moisturiser (E45), and gently massage along the scar line with your fingertip in small circular motions 2-3 times daily for 2 minutes. Scars may feel lumpy at first (normal). Redness fades over 3–6 months, with final results at 6–12 months.