

Staffordshire Eye Clinic

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Local Anaesthesia for your Eye Operation

Local anaesthetic can be given as eye drops and/or injections. The aim is that you do not feel during the operation.

What are the advantages of local anaesthesia?

A local usually has lower risks and fewer side effects than a general anaesthetic, especially if you are elderly. People recover more quickly following surgery under local anaesthetic. You can continue to take any prescribed medicine you are on and may be able to eat and drink as normal.

I would really prefer a general anaesthetic, do I have a choice?

Yes. Modern general anaesthesia is a very safe choice for the vast majority.

Is the local anaesthetic injection painful?

This varies from person to person. Eye drops that numb the surface of the eye are used first to make it as comfortable as possible. A very fine needle is used and there may be a feeling of stinging or pressure which usually lasts less than a minute.

Are there any complications of local anaesthesia?

You may develop bruising if the injection damages a small blood vessel around the eye. This is not usually serious but can look unsightly for a week or so. It is more common if you take aspirin or other drugs that thin the blood. Rarely, there is more important bleeding around the eye and this can mean your operation will have to be delayed to another day.

Serious complications are very rare but damage to the eye, blood vessels or eye muscles and effects on your heart, blood pressure and breathing can happen.

Is there anything that makes people unsuitable for a local anaesthetic to the eye?

Yes. You will need to be able:

- to lie reasonably flat between 15 minutes and an hour depending on the surgery.
- to follow simple instructions.

Local anaesthetic is not normally recommended if you:

- cannot lie reasonably flat
- have an illness (e.g. Parkinson's) that makes being still difficult
- have a cough you cannot control
- have severe hearing difficulties
- will have difficulty understanding what is being said
- have severe claustrophobia
- have a known allergy to local anaesthetic drugs.
- Would prefer general anaesthesia which is usually a reasonable choice

The day of the operation

You do not need usually to starve before local anaesthetic surgery. You can continue to take any prescribed medication as normal on the day of your operation. If you are taking warfarin please clarify with your surgeon the specific advice well before the day of surgery. Please bring any medication you are taking with you to the hospital on the day of your operation. You usually continue taking your own medication while you are in hospital.

If you have a cough or heavy cold on the day of surgery, you should telephone the ward for advice. Your operation may need to be postponed.

You will be asked to sign a consent form and your forehead will be marked on the side of the eye to be operated on.

You should wear comfortable clothing that is loose around the neck. The ward nurses may instil eye drops to make your pupil bigger. It is sensible to use the toilet before you go to theatre so that you can lie still comfortably. A nurse will accompany you to theatre. Theatre staff will check again with you which eye is being operated on and check your consent form.

Your eye surgeon will then give you the eye drops and/or injections which numb your eye. Following the local anaesthetic your eye will be closed. Staff may massage your eye or place a small weight on the closed eye to help the anaesthetic spread evenly.

What happens in the operating theatre?

- The nurse will check you are lying comfortably on the operating table and that your head is supported.
- A sterile surgical sheet will be placed over your face to keep the area around your eye clean. The sheet will be lifted away from your nose and mouth. The sheet will have a hole in it so the surgeon can see your eye to be operated on.
- You will feel fresh air around your mouth and nose to help keep you comfortable during the operation.
- The heart and pulse monitors will be attached.
- You may feel a bit of water running down your face. This is quite normal as the surgeon uses fluid to keep your eye moist.

A member of staff will sit with you and may offer to hold your hand throughout the operation.

Can I speak during the operation?

No, It is best not to speak whilst the surgeon is operating on your eye as this will make your face move and could affect the surgery. If you want to say something, you will be asked to move your hand gently and the eye surgeon will stop operating so that you can speak.

Will I see anything?

You will usually be able to see bright lights and you may see some movements during the operation. This varies from person to person. You will not be able to see any detail.

What else will happen?

The surgeon operates with fine instruments that reach inside your eye – your eye is not removed from its normal position. You will be aware that the surgeon is working and will feel some pressure. If you are uncomfortable in any way please let theatre staff know. More local anaesthetic can be given if necessary.

What if I blink?

A small clip keeps your eyelids open so you do not need to worry about blinking.

Can I wear my hearing aid during the operation?

It is usual practice to remove the hearing aid on the same side as the eye being operated on because, no matter how careful your surgeon is, water can enter the ear and the hearing aid may start to make noises.

After the operation

A nurse will escort you back to the ward in a wheelchair. Your eye may be covered with a shield and pad until the following day to protect it and stop you from rubbing it whilst asleep. When you have recovered and your transport arrives, you may go home. Before you go, the ward nurse will give you written instructions about recovering from your operation, for example, what activities to avoid. He or she will also tell you about any medication you need to take and will show you how to put your eye drops in if you are unsure. Eye drops will be used following surgery to stop inflammation (swelling) and help prevent infection.

You may feel some discomfort when the anaesthetic wears off and a mild painkiller such as paracetamol may be helpful.

When can I drive?

You will need to ask the surgeon how long you should wait before driving, as it varies from person to person.

Do I need to take any special care?

Avoid rubbing the eye. You will be given an eye shield to wear at night for one week after the operation so you can't rub your eye without knowing when asleep. Avoid swimming and dirty water until you get the all-clear.

If you notice a worsening of your symptoms, for example if your vision gets worse, if you develop new symptoms or if the eye becomes painful you need to contact your surgeon or on call eye nurses. The main contact number is Mencom House 01782-614174. Other contacts are Nuffield Hospital 01782-625431 and Emergency Eye Clinic 01782-555141 or 554137