

Information for patients and carers

Orbital Decompression Surgery

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue color, transitioning from a lighter blue at the top to a darker blue at the bottom.

What is Orbital decompression?

Orbital decompression is a type of surgery used to treat bulging eyes (also called proptosis), most commonly caused by thyroid eye disease (TED).

The eye sits in a bony space called the orbit. When tissues behind the eye become swollen, they can push the eye forward, causing discomfort, changes in appearance and sometimes vision problems. Orbital decompression surgery creates more space in the orbit by removing small sections of bone from one or more of its walls. This helps the eye move back into a more natural position and relieves pressure.

Why might I need this surgery?

You may be offered orbital decompression if you:

- Have significant eye bulging that affects your appearance or comfort
- Experience double vision or difficulty closing your eyes
- Have pressure on the optic nerve that could affect your sight
- Feel pain or pressure around your eyes due to swelling

What happens during the surgery?

- The operation is done under a general anaesthetic so you will be asleep throughout.
- It usually takes 2-3 hours
- The surgeon will carefully remove bone from one, two or sometimes three walls of the orbit
- In some cases, fatty tissue may also be removed to reduce pressure.

What to expect after surgery

- You are likely to stay in hospital overnight
- The skin incision will heal over a few weeks; however, natural repair of your deeper tissues can take many months, and this may account for an occasional deeper ache or discomfort during healing for several weeks
- You may experience double vision, which usually improves over time.
- You may have a nasal pack or a nosebleed after surgery
- You will have follow up appointments in clinic and be monitored closely to ensure your vision and eye movements are stable.

Risks of surgery

All surgery carries risks. It is important that you consider these before deciding to proceed.

Risks include:

- Pain, scarring, swelling and bruising
- Temporary or persistent double vision requiring further intervention (10-15%)
- Infection
- Loss of sensation to the cheek, temple or forehead
- Sinusitis
- Retraction of the lower eyelid or eyelid asymmetry
- Dry eye
- Leakage of cerebrospinal fluid
- Meningitis (<0.1%)
- Overcorrection causing sunken eye appearance
- Under correction with persistent eye protrusion
- Bleeding requiring return to theatre (<0.1%)
- Eye or orbital damage with a loss of vision (rare <0.1%)

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Lancashire Eye Centre Oculoplastic secretaries:

 01257 245058 or 01772 521392

If you have an urgent, sight-threatening problem:

Nurse triage line (09:00–16:30):

 01257 245346

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

www.btf-thyroid.org – British Thyroid Foundation

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Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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