

Blepharoplasty

Patient diary

Initial appointment

I had been bothered for a few years with sagging upper eyelids. The left eye in particular felt uncomfortable and the drooping worsened towards the end of the day or when I was tired.

My initial appointment was with Mr Malhotra at his Harley Street consultation offices. I was very apprehensive about having facial surgery but was reassured as this was his specialist area.

We discussed my eyelid issues and the different options available. Mr Malhotra was very patient and understanding and I found it easy to discuss the procedures with him. He explained what each different procedure would achieve and how each was carried out.

I opted for upper eyelid surgery and to have a mini brow lift at the same time. I chose to have a local anaesthetic, as I was comfortable with the idea of being awake while it was done, but I believe these procedures can also be carried out under general anaesthetic, or an in-between level of sedation.

Mr Malhotra's secretary called me the following day to confirm the total price, including hospital costs, where the operation would take place and the date. My operation was carried out at Gatwick Park BUPA Hospital. I made the decision not to have an overnight stay but this is one thing I would recommend to someone else, especially if you have your operation late in the day, as I did.

Day of surgery

My partner drove me to the hospital, as you are not allowed to drive yourself back – and, indeed, wouldn't be capable of doing so. I was shown to a very pleasant room, where I changed into a hospital gown. Mr Malhotra and another doctor came in to see me and gave me an idea of what time my operation would be carried out, as he had several procedures before me that day.

At around 7.30pm, the nurses came through to take me to theatre. I had to take my contact lenses out at this point. I assumed I would walk but you are actually wheeled through on the bed.

Once in the theatre, I did start feeling nervous again, but everyone there was reassuring. There were three additional nursing staff, as well as Mr Malhotra and the other doctor, who was observing the procedure as she was training to do the same thing. This was actually quite useful as, because he was explaining to her what he was doing, I got the run-through of how the procedures would take place.

The brow lift was to be done first and so this was the first area the local anaesthetic was injected into – my forehead in the right upper area near the hairline and the left in the same place. This I would describe as uncomfortable and a bit painful but not unbearable and not as bad as I thought it would be. It wasn't long at all before the whole top of my head felt completely numb – perhaps a couple of minutes.

Raman Malhotra

Consultant ophthalmic and oculoplastic surgeon

The next bit (sorry, I have to be honest!) was the local injections into the upper eyelid area. This was very painful and uncomfortable. One of the nurses held my hand, which really did help a lot.

At this point, I would say that if you aren't good with pain, it would probably be an idea if you are having the upper eyelid surgery to opt for sedation. However, compared with childbirth, it's a walk in the park, as I kept telling the nurses (and myself!). If you are only having brow work, then I personally I found the local anaesthetic option fine.

The surgery itself was utterly painless. The brow work was done first, right side then left. These were stitched with normal stitches that have to be taken out. I couldn't feel anything other than a slight tugging. To relax me further, my choice of music was put on in the background and I chatted while the operation was going on, which helped to take my mind off what was happening. At one point I felt a slight twinge and mentioned it, whereupon the local anaesthetic was topped up (which was painless).

The eye surgery was also completely painless and dissolvable stitches were used. The operation lasted about two hours and I was wheeled back on the bed. The nurses were very reassuring – you can't see anything because your eyes are covered with pads to soak up any last bits of bleeding.

I was issued with paracetamol, additional dressings, saline solution and eye ointment, along with a gel eye pack. After eating and drinking (which they insist you do before you leave), my partner came to collect me. I had to take the pads off to travel, so he did see my surgery, but it's very difficult at this point to imagine what the end result will be.

Once at home, I became slightly tearful and worried about what I'd done – the enormity of having facial surgery suddenly kicked in. Apparently this is not unusual. I'm not writing this to put anyone off – just to make you feel more normal/better if you go through it! I was fine by the following morning.

I did need to use pain killers to get to sleep and continued to use them on and off for the next three days, after which I didn't need them. I wasn't in great discomfort, I just felt as if I had a headache. The gel eye pack was excellent – you put it in the fridge for a while then lie down with it on your eyes. I went to sleep several times with this on, as it is so soothing.

Afterwards

Day 2

I looked relatively normal in the morning but by mid-afternoon, underneath my left eye had started swelling. At this point, it appeared the eye was more stretched upwards on the right than the left eye and quite a bit more of the iris was visible on the right eye. This led to a major panicking session on my part, and I phoned Mr Malhotra's secretary.

Within 15 minutes, Mr Malhotra had been contacted and rang me. He reassured me that the uneven swelling was probably causing this look but would look at photos, which I e-mailed over to him.

Day 3

Right eye starts to swell by lunchtime. Left eye very swollen indeed. Eyes still look unbalanced. Spoke to Mr Malhotra, who had seen the photos and was not concerned – he reiterated that,

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once the swelling had gone down, the eyes should even up.

Two points to note:

- It's very reassuring that your surgeon is so readily contactable, especially bearing in mind that I was ringing after 10pm on a Friday night and over the weekend.
- Try not to judge the final outcome by what you look like at this point, even if it is easier said than done.

Day 4

Came off the painkillers completely, still using the gel pack. Both eyes are extremely swollen underneath and have gone purple. When I use the gel pack, it lessens the swelling a great deal.

Days 5-6

Eyes start to look less swollen and turn yellow underneath. Eye gel pack is still in constant use. By day 6, eyes are starting to even up.

Day 7

Back to hospital this am for my appointment with Mr Malhotra. By now, eyes have evened up completely. I still have the remnants of black eyes – bad enough to make me wear Victoria Beckham-sized sunglasses while waiting in the main reception. Mr Malhotra is pleased with the results and, by now, so am I. Although I was originally scheduled to have the stitches in my forehead removed today, Mr Malhotra recommends coming back next week to give the wounds a bit longer. As these stitches aren't visible, because of my hairstyle, this isn't a problem.

Week Two

By day 9, I look pretty normal. For the next week or so, when I wake up in the morning my eyes and eye lids are quite puffy, so I schedule in a gel eye pack session for 20 minutes every am, which works well. As the day progresses, the puffiness seems to wear off.

I experience little twinges in my eyelids, like electric shocks, which I believe are the nerves healing. This lessens as the days go by.

I can finally, more than a week after the operation, see what I now look like. The effect is subtle, which is what I wanted. My eyes are more open but look very natural and the brow lift has raised my eyebrows slightly, which is what I wanted as they didn't have much of an arch in them before. I also have fewer lines on my brow but there are still some, which looks in keeping with the rest of my face. If they had all gone, it would have looked unnatural.

Day 13

I have stitches removed by a nurse in the hospital.

Week Three

Three weeks after the operation, the eyelid twinges have gone completely. The top of my head is slightly numb but this is slowly getting back to normal. It seems to help when I wash my hair and massage my head. The scars on the hairline from the brow lift are healing well. My eyelids are healing well too, although the dissolvable stitches don't seem to have dissolved in many places. Apparently these dissolve at slightly different rates with different people but I am going in today to have them removed.

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Consultant ophthalmic and oculoplastic surgeon

The finished result is very good – the droopy eyelid thing has gone completely. The brow lift has given me a better eyebrow arch and I do look a few years younger. It's subtle, though – people who don't know I've had it done haven't realised, although this hasn't been tested on very close female friends yet, and my family think that I still look like me but a bit better, which I think they were a bit worried I wouldn't.

The whole process was much easier and less traumatic than I expected. I must also say that the level of care and support both during and after the operation is excellent, both from Mr Malhotra and from the nursing staff at the hospital.