



Patient information leaflet
Ectropion

Ectropion is the term given to a saggy out-turned lower eyelid.

The main cause of ectropion is increased laxity of the lower lid with age. Other causes include trauma, scarring and facial nerve palsy, in which impairment of the facial nerve reduces the tone of the eyelids.

Symptoms may include irritable, red, sore and watery eyes.

When the lower lid no longer sits against the eye, tear drainage is reduced. Tears pool in the lower lid and may spill over on to the lower lids and cheek causing dry cracked and sore skin. The eyelids have an important role of protecting the eye from dust and debris partly by adequate closure but also by spreading tears across the eye surface to remove particulate matter. When the eyelids are lax, this function is impaired and the eye may become red and feel dry, sore and irritable. This can lead to increased tearing.

Rarely, if untreated, an ectropion may lead to a dry eye surface and subsequent infection, which may pose a risk to vision.

Ocular lubricants may be used to soothe the eye and provide temporary relief. They will not correct the condition. This treatment method may be impractical in the long term.

Surgery is usually required to correct the lower lid malposition and restore anatomical structure and function. This is usually achieved through lower lid tightening in which the outer aspect of the lower lid is repositioned against the lateral wall of the eye socket. This involves a small skin incision, which is hidden within a small laughter line at the outer corner of the eyelid. Different surgical approaches may be needed depending on the cause. As such, surgical operating times may vary from 30 to 90 minutes according to the complexity of the case.

No operation is without risk. Minor swelling and bruising is common and may last for up to 2 to 3 weeks. Initially the lid may feel and look very tight and have an Oriental appearance. This generally tends to resolve itself over 4 to 12 weeks. Potential complications (risks) of ectropion surgery include bleeding and infection, scarring, under or over correction, asymmetry between the two eyelids, recurrence, irritation from the sutures (stitches) or from an allergy to prescribed eye drops, and

damage to the eye or eyesight. These risks are very uncommon in the hands of a specialist Oculoplastic surgeon.