

Eye Surgery Preparation and Post Op Suggestions

Preparing for eye surgery involves ensuring that the person is aware of what will be happening and working closely with the Medical Team to plan for a safe and successful recovery. The key is taking time for communication among the individual, the medical team, family members, friends, and the team of service providers who will be caring for the person after surgery.

Preparing for the Visit to the Eye Doctor

Bring pen and paper and a list of questions. It may also be helpful for two people to accompany the individual. In this way, one person can be sure that the individual's needs are met, while the other can document the doctor's answers.

Questions for the Eye Doctor

The Big Picture

1. What problem is the eye surgery addressing?
2. How will the individual's visual ability change after the surgery?
3. For the long term after the surgery, will the individual need to wear prescription eyeglasses or sunglasses? Will eye medications need to be taken either by mouth, by eye drop or eye ointment?
4. What are the risks of the surgery?

What to Expect Immediately After Surgery

1. How long is recovery from surgery? Will an overnight at the hospital be needed and if so, for how many days?
2. What type of bandage or patch or protective glasses will be needed to be worn after surgery and for how long?

If any bandage, etc. will be needed ask for two samples. You can show the individual and demonstrate through turn taking how the item is worn. This will help to prepare the individual and also give you opportunity to see how the person responds to wearing the bandage or patch or protective glasses.

Eye Surgery (continued)

Questions for the Eye Doctor (continued)

Additional Requirements or Limitations

1. What medications will need to be administered during the recovery period? Will frequent eye drops be needed daily? How many times a day will the medication be administered, and for how long?
2. Will there be any physical limitations during recovery? For example, no bending, no heavy lifting, no touching of the eye, or eye area. And for how long after surgery (days, weeks) will these limitations need to be honored?
3. Be sure to ask any other questions that reflect concerns the individual has or that you or other caregivers, family members, or friends may have based on the particular needs and preferences of the individual in terms of eye surgery or recovery.

Preparing the Individual

Preparing the individual is a crucial step to successful post-operative care and will offer important information as to how the individual may react to any post-operative bandage, eye patch or glasses that may be required. The following steps for preparing the individual should be done in a supportive environment by a person with whom the individual feels most comfortable. Be sure to consider the person's needs and preferences including the amount of functional vision the individual has.

1. Make sure the individual knows which eye is going to be operated on.
2. Present the protective eyewear that will have to be worn during recovery. Assist the person to put the eyewear on. If helpful, you could put one set of the bandages and/or protective glasses on first to show the individual and then take turns. This exercise will also help you to see how the person may react to any protective eyewear after the surgery and will give you time to plan accordingly.
3. If any physical limitations will be imposed on the person during recovery, talk about that as well. Use demonstration and role-play if appropriate.
4. Explain if any eye drops or ointments will have to be placed in the eye after surgery. The doctor's office may have pamphlets with pictures of administration of eye drops/eye ointments for the individual to look at.
5. Be sure that all of the individual's questions are answered. If you do not know the answers, put the person in contact with someone who can answer the questions such as another caregiver, family member, friend, or the individual's eye doctor or medical team.

Eye Surgery (continued)

Planning for Post-Operative Care

Planning is important for anyone who is going to have eye surgery, but again, is especially important if the individual may have difficulty tolerating post-operative bandaging, administration of eye medication, and/or any physical limitations that may be required immediately after surgery. Schedule a meeting with all caregivers, family, and friends who will be responsible for caring for the individual after surgery.

Staffing Needs for Initial Recovery

Recovery in Hospital

If the individual will need to spend overnight(s) in the hospital, representatives from the medical Team who will be caring for the individual, and who may not know the person very well, should also be present at the planning meeting, or at a minimum be made aware of any concerns.

Questions to Consider

1. Will the individual need support from familiar staff during awake hours or for around the clock during the hospital stay to monitor for safety?
2. Who will provide the support?
3. How many days will the individual stay in the hospital after surgery?
4. Are there any items or quiet activities that could be brought to the hospital to make the stay more comfortable for the individual?

Day Surgery, Recovery at Home, or Recovery at Respite

If skilled nursing or respite services are needed following surgery, a representative from each service provider should be present at the planning meeting to ensure effective communication of plans and concerns regarding post-surgical care.

Questions to Consider

1. Is the environment quiet/calm enough for the individual to recover at home or will an alternate respite site be needed for the initial recovery?
2. Will skilled nursing services be needed? Or training for staff for eye care after surgery? If so, who will provide training and monitoring of care?
3. Will the individual need support from familiar staff during awake hours or for around the clock to monitor for safety?
4. Would the individual tolerate staying in bed if needed, without someone sitting close by?

Eye Surgery (continued)

Day Surgery, Recovery (continued)

Questions to Consider (continued)

5. Would the individual be able to use the bathroom independently if needed?
6. If staffing support is needed, who will provide the support?
7. How many days will the individual need to remain “quiet” during this stage of recovery?
8. Are there any items or activities that could be provided to make this phase of recovery more comfortable for the individual?
9. Are there any activities or items that should be tucked away as they are favorites of the person, but can't be used for safety or due to any required physical limitations during the initial recovery phase?

Bandages, Eye Patches, and/or Protective Glasses

Most often protective eyewear, for some period of time, is needed and exceptions cannot be made. Depending upon what was provided to the individual for trial and how the individual tolerated it, ask the eye doctor if it would be possible for the individual to wear the least intrusive protection available. For example, some individuals will wear clear safety glasses, but will not tolerate either the clear plastic or pinhole type metal patch that is taped to the face to cover the eye. When eyewear is definitely needed, there is a range of options for helping the individual to safely wear the protective bandages, eye patches and/or glasses. Consult with the medical team for options.

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See also MCB/DDS Partnership handouts:

- Making the Most of an Eye Exam
- Eyeglasses and Sunglasses

For additional resources, please visit: focusonvisionandvisionloss.org