

Retinal Surgery

This handout will tell you what to expect and what to do at home after retina surgery. If you have any questions about your home care, please be sure to ask your nurse or doctor.

A vitrectomy is a type of surgery done to repair a detached retina or to remove vitreous, blood, and membranes from the inside of the eye to improve vision.

A scleral buckle is a type of surgery done to fix a detached retina. The outer layer of the eye is indented (buckled) by placing a piece of silicone to the surface of the eye.

What to Expect

You should wear the eye patch and shield until your follow-up visit.

Your doctor will remove the patch and shield the day after surgery. Your eye may look red, swollen, or bruised, and may have a small amount of crusty drainage.

You may have dull pain, aching, or a scratchy feeling in your eye for a couple of days. You can take Tylenol® for pain, if needed.

What to Do

Leave the patch or shield on at night. Do not use eye drops in the affected eye the first night unless told otherwise. Keep using any other eye medicines you may be taking in the other eye.

We will give you prescriptions for eye drops and/or eye ointment. Have them filled and bring them with you to all visits. Your doctor will tell you how to use them and how long you will need to use them. Always wash your hands before using eye drops.

If the eye or the skin of the lids has increased redness or swelling, you may be allergic to the eye drops. Stop using the eye drops and contact your doctor right away.

How to Use the Eye Kit

Your nurse will provide you with and show you how to use the “eye kit.” Please bring the kit with you to your first post-op visit.

1. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Then, dry them using a clean towel.
2. Soak the sterile cotton balls with the eye wash solution you were given.

3. Lay the wet cotton ball against your closed eye for a few minutes to soften any crusting that may have formed.
4. Wipe gently from the inner corner (near the nose) outward.
5. To prevent the spread of an infection, use a separate cotton ball for each eye.

Metal Shield

Use the shield each night, or while taking a nap, for 1 week. This protects your eye from trauma when you are asleep.

Eye Patch

You may use an eye patch or metal shield for comfort or protection when you are outdoors. You do not need to wear the patch indoors. You may wear dark glasses for comfort if light bothers your eyes.

Activities

Work – Unless your doctor says not to, you may do light work. Avoid strenuous tasks. Do not lift anything over 30 pounds for 2 weeks. Avoid vigorous coughing, sneezing, chopping, pounding, or jerking movements. Avoid bending below the waist.

Exercise – Cold air won't harm your eye so feel free to take daily walks (with help, if needed). You may walk up and down stairs, but don't rush.

Driving – If your vision is okay you may drive. Ask your doctor about when you may resume driving.

Positioning – A gas bubble may be injected into your eye during surgery. Your doctor will talk to you about the proper position and how long you must remain in the position after surgery. You must be very careful and follow these directions closely. You cannot drive, exercise, or work during this phase.

Washing your hair – If you wash your hair in the shower, make sure no soap or shampoo gets in your eyes. If you prefer, sit with your back to a sink and your head tipped back as in a beauty salon. We suggest that you use baby shampoo.

Watching TV and reading – If your vision is okay, you may read after surgery. Feel free to watch as much TV as you like.

Diet – You may eat your normal diet.

When to Call

- Pain not controlled by pain medicine.
- Nausea/vomiting that may be a sign of increased eye pressure.
- Increased redness or swelling
- Decreased vision
- Questions or concerns

Who to Call

University Station Eye Clinic
8 am- 4:30 pm, Monday- Friday
(608) 263-7171.

After hours, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the “eye resident on call.” Give your name and number with area code. The doctor will call you back.

Toll-free- 1-800-323-8942. Ask to be transferred to the above number.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority, All Rights Reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4360