

Tear Duct Surgery: *What to Expect*

What can I expect after tear duct surgery?

During tear duct surgery, you may have a tiny silicone tube placed in your tear drainage system. This will allow your body to heal properly. It may be uncomfortable for the first few days, but will get better as time passes. **Do not move it around.**

Sometimes, the tube can come part or all of the way out of the tear duct. Don't worry. The tube will not hurt your eye or eyelid. But, do call your healthcare provider and tell them what happened.

Over the first few days, you can expect:

- **Scratchy eye** (feels like there's sand in it). This will go away once your eye gets used to the silicone tube. You will be given a prescription for an ointment to put in your eye if you don't have an eye patch.
- **Blurry vision.** This is from the swelling and the ointment. Most of the swelling will go away after 2 or 3 days. You may continue to have a small amount of swelling for up to a month after surgery.
- **Tearing.** A "watery" eye is normal. This is your body's way of helping your eye to heal.
- **Bleeding.** Over the first 2 days, it's normal to have small amounts of bleeding in the surgery site and from the nose. You may also have bloody tears.
- **Bruising.** Black and blue marks are normal after surgery. These marks will likely move down your face to your neck as you heal. It may take up to 3 weeks for the bruising to go away completely. During this time, **you must protect your eyes, face, and neck from the sun.** Wear sunglasses, sunscreen with at least 30 SPF, and a wide-brimmed hat when going outdoors.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- Worsening vision, especially if it's with vomiting or pain
- Swelling in the surgical site that is the size of a ping-pong ball or larger
- Bleeding that soaks an entire wash cloth
- Pain that is severe, comes with vomiting or fever, or won't go away
- The silicone tube comes out of your tear duct

How do I care for myself after surgery?

Medicine

It's normal to feel moderate pain for the first couple days after surgery. In most cases, acetaminophen (Tylenol®) will be enough to control your pain. Do not use ibuprofen or aspirin as they can cause bleeding. You may also be given an opioid [OH-pee-oid] pain medicine. If so:

- **Take it exactly as ordered.** Don't take more than the prescription says to take, even if you continue to have pain.
- **Never take opioids with alcohol or street drugs.** The combination can kill you.
- **Don't share your pain medicine with anyone, even if they have pain.** It's illegal and could seriously harm or kill them.
- **Take any leftover opioids to an Intermountain pharmacy** for safe disposal.
- **Do not drive or operate heavy machinery** if you are taking opioid pain medicine.

Activity

Unless your healthcare provider says it's okay:

- Avoid any heavy lifting or straining for 7 days.
- Skip strenuous exercise, sunbathing, or any other activity that can make your body overheat for at least 3 weeks after surgery
- Avoid flying for the first 2 days after surgery.
- Don't wear contact lenses for 7 to 10 days after surgery. Ask your healthcare provider when you can use them again.
- Don't get your patch wet, if you have one. Keep it dry until your healthcare provider can take it off.
- Avoid taking a shower or bath, going for a swim, or using a hot tub.
- Don't use eye make-up until the sutures are removed or the incision lines are well-healed.

Wound care

To help your eye heal quickly:

- Wrap ice cubes or chips in a clean, soft towel, and place it gently on your eye. Leave it in place for 15 to 20 minutes. Do this at least 6 times each day (while you are awake) for the first 48 hours (2 days) after your surgery. This will help keep the swelling down. **Do not put ice directly on your skin. If you are wearing a patch, do not get it wet.**
- Don't lay flat. Keep your head above your heart to help reduce swelling.
- Be gentle with your eyelid when putting in eye drops or ointment.
- Don't rub or press on your eye.
- Don't smoke. It slows your body's ability to heal.



Questions for my doctor

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