

Ectropion

Ectropion is a common eye condition, especially in older people, as age tends to weaken the delicate muscles around the eyes. Ectropion causes the lower eyelid to droop away from the eye, and sometimes jut outwards. This leaves the inner surface of the eye visible and exposed, which can leave it teary, sore and vulnerable to infection.

Symptoms

The most common symptom of ectropion is a watery eye. The tear duct is a tiny passageway that drains tears from the surface of the eye to the back of the nose. An ectropion eyelid droops and turns outwards, taking the tear duct away from the surface of the eye. This prevents the tears from draining properly, and they build up inside the drooping eyelid causing the eyes to weep constantly. As tears cannot properly drain, bacteria cannot be cleaned away from the surface of the eye. This makes the eye particularly vulnerable to infection and irritation, which can cause redness, irritation and discharge.

Causes

The most common cause of ectropion is an age-related weakening of the muscles around the eyes, which can no longer support the eyelid in its normal position.

The condition can also be caused by:

- Injury or sun-damage to the skin around the eyes. This causes contraction of the skin of the eyelid, pulling it out of its normal position.
- Facial palsy. This is when the muscles of the face, including the muscles that control the eyelids, become paralysed or weak, due to temporary or permanent facial nerve injury.
- Eyelid lesions. The weight of some lumps and bumps around the eye may physically pull the eyelid out of its normal position.

Treatment

In most cases, ectropion can be relieved fairly simply. Surgery to tighten the skin and muscles that hold the lid in place is the most common and effective treatment. This is a minor operation, performed under local anaesthetic as day case surgery (meaning you'll be able to go home the same day), and usually takes about 40 minutes. The tightening procedure most often involves the use of small dissolvable sutures (stitches) at the outer corner of the eyelid and sometimes under the lashes of the lower eyelid.

Your eye will usually be padded for one day, and you will be given eye drops and ointment to take for 2 weeks following the operation. For more detailed information on recovery from surgery see Post-operative Eyelid Surgery Instructions.

In more complex cases, Mr Ismail will discuss the surgery with you in more detail according to the cause of the problem.

Private appointments and enquiries

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