

Tarsorrhaphy

This material will help you understand your tarsorrhaphy procedure and what you can expect.

What is tarsorrhaphy?

Tarsorrhaphy is a procedure in which your eyelids are partially sewn together, narrowing your eye opening. Your eyelids protect the eye from injury and also help cleanse the eye and keep it moist. There are many conditions that can affect these functions and endanger your eye, specifically the cornea. The cornea is the clear window in the front of the eye.

Conditions that may benefit from tarsorrhaphy include:

- Surface defects of the cornea or a corneal ulcer that is not healing
- Paralysis or weakness of the eyelids so that they cannot blink properly. Bell's palsy is a common cause of facial paralysis.
- Graves' disease or other conditions that expose the cornea.
- Sjörger's Syndrome and other conditions that reduce tear flow.

Tarsorrhaphy is not permanent, and the stiches can be removed once the underlying condition has been treated and your eye's normal function has returned.

What do I need to know before my tarsorrhaphy?

There are no special preparations for this procedure. You should eat normally and take all your regular medicines before you come in for surgery.

The procedure is performed as an outpatient surgery or in your doctor's office, so you will be able to go home the same day. Be sure to arrange for a responsible adult to come with you, stay during surgery, and take you home. Your eyes will be blurry after the surgery and your peripheral (side) vision will be reduced, so you should not drive that day.

What should I expect on the day of my tarsorrhaphy?

On the day of your procedure, you will come to the Kellogg Eye Center Cornea Clinic. A technician will first take a few measurements of your eyes. S/he will administer local anesthesia to numb the area around your eye.

Once your eyelid and area around your eye is numb, your eye doctor will sew stitches at the corners of your eyelids. This will keep your eye partly closed to help your eyes stay more moist and better protect them from injury. The procedure usually takes about 30 minutes to complete.

What can I expect after my tarsorrhaphy?

The area around your treated eye(s) will likely be a little red and swollen. Applying a cold compress to the eyelid may help relieve some of your discomfort. You may experience some pain, but it should go away in a few days.

The area around your eye will be also somewhat sensitive after this procedure. You should avoid touching or rubbing your eye and stop wearing eye makeup until your doctor tells you it is ok to do so.

This procedure will limit your peripheral (side) vision, so it will take some time for you to adjust. In order to make up for the limited vision, you will need to fully turn your head to look at objects. You should avoid activities such as driving until you are given approval.

Are there complications related to tarsorrhaphy?

Tarsorrhaphy has very few risks. Rare complications include minor eyelid swelling and surface infection. If you have any of these symptoms (or any others that worry you), you should call your eye doctor right away:

- Increased pain not helped by Tylenol® (Acetaminophen)
- Change in vision
- Any redness or swelling around the eye gets progressively worse

If you call the clinic after clinic hours, you will be told how to get in touch with the eye doctor on call. There is an eye doctor on call every day of the year.

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