

Scleral Buckle Surgery

This material will help you understand the basics of your scleral buckle surgery to repair your retinal detachment.

What is a scleral buckle?

A scleral buckle is a flexible band that the doctor attaches around the center of the eye. The buckle pushes the wall of the eye against the detached retina, holding it back in place. Usually this treatment is done in combination with a laser or freeze treatment called “cryopexy” to seal the retina in place and fix any tears. The scleral buckle stays in place around your eye. However, it will not be visible from the outside because it is covered by the conjunctiva (“skin of the eye”).

What should I expect before my scleral buckle surgery?

Before surgery, you may have a physical to prepare for anesthesia. They may need to check an electrocardiogram (EKG) for your heart and do some blood work. Your doctor will decide whether local or general anesthesia will be used for your procedure.

An operating room nurse will call you prior to surgery to give you your arrival time. The nurse will go over any questions you may have and tell you what time to stop eating and drinking to prepare for surgery. The nurse will also let you know if you should not take any of your regular morning medications. Unless the nurse tells you not to take one or more of your morning medications, you can assume that you should take all of your regular morning medications with small sips of water, but without anything to eat.

Be sure to arrange for a responsible adult to come with you, stay during surgery, and take you back home. You cannot drive for 24 hours after surgery because of the anesthesia you will receive.

What should I expect on the day of my surgery?

On the day of the surgery you will go to the 4th floor of the Kellogg Eye Center to check in. You will meet your nurses, anesthesiologists, and operating room team. We will take you back to the operating room and lie you down flat. We will numb the eye with special drops and the anesthesiologist will give you relaxing medicines through your IV. The surgery takes about 1-2 hours. The procedure is usually performed as an outpatient surgery and you will be able to go home the same day.

During the surgery, the eye doctor will place a silicone band (the scleral buckle) around the white part of your eye (the sclera). This relieves the tension that is pulling the retina out of place. To prevent the tear from opening again, the eye doctor will seal the retina in place. This is usually done using the cryopexy freeze treatment.

Often, your eye doctor will also drain the fluid from under the detached retina. This makes it easier for your retina to go back in place against the back wall of the eye.

What should I expect after my surgery?

You can expect some discomfort after your surgery. Your doctor will patch your eye, which you will need to wear for a short time. You should also limit your activities for a few days. Your doctor will prescribe eye drops to ease the pain and calm any inflammation from the surgery.

Your eye doctor will let you know when it safe to resume your normal activities.

Are there any complications related to scleral buckle surgery?

As with any surgery, there is a chance of a complication. Some of the more serious complications of getting a scleral buckle include scarring of the retina, infection, bleeding, double vision, and increased eye pressure. Contact your eye doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms (or any others that worry you):

- Increased pain not helped by Tylenol® (Acetaminophen)
- Vision loss
- Discharge from eye
- New flashes or floaters in your field of vision

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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Author: Kathleen Koviak, MPH Candidate
Reviewers: Steven Cohen, MD and Gale Oren, MILS

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