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REMOVAL OF AN EYE

Q *Why does an eye need to be removed?*

A Removal of an eye is avoided if at all possible. However in the presence of overwhelming infection inside the eye or, much less commonly a tumour, the eye would normally have to be removed. Sometimes an eye has become blind over the years for a number of possible reasons and it has then become painful. If the pain cannot be easily controlled and especially if the eye is unsightly it is quite often preferable to have the eye removed.

Q *How is the operation done?*

A The operation is normally done under general anaesthesia but local anaesthesia can be used in special circumstances. Depending on how much of the eye needs to be removed the operation is called “evisceration” (removal of the contents of the eye), or “enucleation” (removal of the whole eye).

Q *What will I look like afterwards?*

A A clear plastic “conformer” is placed behind the eyelids where the eye was. After a few weeks when the wounds have healed a temporary artificial eye is normally fitted. This is selected to look as close as possible like the normal eye but it is only a temporary measure. After about three months you will be measured for your final artificial eye which is made just for you and will fit no-one else. It should match your normal eye closely. Minor adjustments to it may be needed to achieve the best result. A well made artificial eye is almost indistinguishable from a normal eye.

Q *Will the artificial eye move?*

A Yes. An artificial eye almost always has some movement but it will not move as much as the normal eye.

Q *Will I have to take out the artificial eye?*

A You will be shown how to take out the eye at regular intervals for cleaning. At first this may be every day or two but it is often possible to leave an artificial eye in place for several months and take it out only occasionally.

Q *Will I have to use any long-term treatment?*

A Lubricant eye drops and occasionally antibiotic eye drops are needed from time to time. However most artificial eyes do not need regular eye drops.

Q *Is any other follow up needed?*

A Yes. You will be seen regularly in the Eye Clinic and also by the Ocular Prosthetist. They will check that the socket is well healed and that the eye is clean and requires no attention.

Q *Are there any long-term complications?*

A At the time of the removal of your eye an “implant” (a small sphere about 2cm in diameter and made of plastic or sometimes other materials) is buried within the tissues behind the artificial eye. This normally causes no problems but occasionally it can become exposed or even have to be removed. Infrequently the space in which the artificial eye sits can become scarred or contracted and further surgery may be needed to ensure that the artificial eye can be worn comfortably. Other complications are very uncommon.

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