

Informed Consent for Office Procedures to Improve Tearing

What office procedures can help my tearing?

Most people whose eyes water are found to have an underlying dry eye that triggers the release of overflow tears to soothe the eyes. In others, there is a physical in the tear drain pipe leading into the nose. There is another group of patients who may have loose lids that no longer do a good job of sweeping tears to the drainage holes at the inside corner of the eyelid (a “punctum”). These patients MAY benefit from a short procedure where the lower lid is tightened to improve tear flow away from the eye. Alternatively, the eyelid drainage hole may be unusually small or tight. In SOME patients, snipping this open (called a “snip punctoplasty”) may allow more tears to drain away from the eye.

How is lid tightening or a snip punctoplasty performed?

In lid tightening, a short cut is usually made at the outside corner of the eye and a small segment of the outer lower lid is removed. This will not harm the eye or prevent proper movement of the eyelid. The shortened lower lid is then suspended and reattached with stitches to the outside corner of the eye where it is now hugging the eyeball a little more tightly.

In a snip punctoplasty, a short rod is used to enlarge the tight tear duct hole (“punctum”) and then a small scissors is used to snip one side of the hole to make it a bit larger. There is minimal bleeding and no stitching is necessary.

How will lid tightening or snip punctoplasty affect appearance or vision?

Aside from temporary swelling and bruising, it is not expected that either procedure will cause a permanent change in your appearance. If a lid is very loose before surgery, it will look more normal as a result of this procedure. Most people are pleased with this improved appearance if it happens. It is extremely rare for these procedures to permanently change your vision.

What are the major risks lid tightening or snip punctoplasty?

There are very few risks with these procedures. All surgery has theoretic risk of infection, bleeding and scarring but these are very rare with these minor office procedures. The most important consequence of either procedure is that they may not be effective in improving or relieving the tearing of the eye(s).

What are the alternatives?

You may decide to live with the tearing. It is not inherently harmful to the eye though it is commonly very aggravating to most patients. People who are thought to tear from dry eye or allergies may benefit from drops to treat those conditions. Those who have a blockage in the tear drain near the nose may benefit from outpatient tear drain bypass surgery or dacryocystorhinostomy (DCR). People not falling into any of these categories may consider botulinum (Botox) injections to the lacrimal glands beneath the outer upper eyelid. Botox is not FDA-approved for this purpose (being so-called, "off-label") and insurance does not cover its use. Some people find great relief with these injections but all Botox wears off and the injection would need to be repeated every 3-5 months for sustained relief from chronic tearing. Tearing can be caused by many factors. It will not always be possible to figure out the reason for your tearing nor is it always possible that your tearing problem can be fixed.

What type of anesthesia is used? What are its major risks?

Lid tightening or snip punctoplasty are performed in the office using local (injection) anesthesia. Risks of injections include damage to eye, allergic reactions and increased heart rate.

Patient's acceptance of risks

I have read the above information and have discussed it with Dr. Fountain. I understand that is impossible for the physician to inform me of every possible complication that may occur. Dr. Fountain has told me that the results cannot be guaranteed and that I may not see ANY improvement in my tearing condition. By signing below, I agree that Dr. Fountain has answered all of my questions and that I understand and accept the risks, benefits, and alternatives of lid tightening or snip punctoplasty surgery, and understand the costs involved.

I consent to (circle one) lid tightening surgery or lower lid snip punctoplasty on:

_____ Right Eye _____ Left Eye _____ Both Eyes

Patient Name

Signature

Date