

Blepharoplasty – Patient description of experience

Upper blepharoplasty under local anaesthesia only

SW April 2014

I am writing this to reassure anyone out there who is considering eyelid surgery, and is in the 'research stage' as I was for at least a couple of years before finally deciding to go ahead. There are many myths and legends out there about the procedure, some of which concerned me greatly when I was doing my own research, so hopefully an honest account of a very recent experience (currently on day 14 post surgery) will help to answer some questions and allay some fears!

I had been unhappy about my upper eyelids for the past 5 years – they appeared to have 'sunk' down and no matter how much I spent on creams and non surgical treatments to improve their appearance, they did not significantly improve. I started the arduous process of finding a surgeon by googling 'best upper eyelid surgeons' and quickly found that there are many experts (so called) out there, which on closer inspection seem to specialise in the whole body rather than the face alone. I initially went the mass market route with a well known cosmetic surgery organisation and met with a nurse/advisor who gave me a list of possible surgeons that may fit the bill – it worried me that I was meeting with a non medically qualified person, and I felt strongly that I should meet the surgeon in order to build trust and assess rapport. So I carried on searching and visited the website of Dr. De Silva a few times. I was impressed with the level of detail available on the website, plus the fact that he deals exclusively with facial surgery. So I went ahead and booked an appointment.

My initial consultation went well, and I was impressed by Dr. De Silva's manner and professionalism. He also took a great deal of time to understand my motivations and expectations of results, as well as examining and measuring my eyes. I came away from the meeting feeling confident in his abilities and reassured that the process was something I could cope with. In the next 2 weeks, I went ahead and booked in for the surgery, which was to take place on April 10<sup>th</sup> at the Centre in Hammersmith Grove.

A couple of points here of note...your GP is able to carry out the necessary blood tests required before the surgery. The centre provide the details of a local walk in that will also carry out the bloods for you, and results can be back in 24 hours – I would use them only as a last ditch solution as the cost is £260!! You will need to meet with Dr DS for a pre operation consultation, so plan time for it early as it is hard to get an appointment if you leave it too late to book in. These appointments take place at the centre where surgery will take place, and you will be shown the theatre and the consultation rooms which is quite reassuring as my initial appointment was in Harley street. Finally, you are able to speak to recent patients to gain 'first hand' experiences – I spoke to two and it was well worth the time and effort. I was torn between a local anesthetic and twilight sedation, and talking it through with people who had just had the procedure dispelled some of my worries after reading on line horror stories.

On the day of surgery you arrive at the centre approx. 30 mins before your booked time. Note – you can park on the road outside and you do not need change as the ticket machines all take cards. There is also a café next door to the centre who make a great cappuccino ☺ I had a calming cup of coffee beforehand sat outside in the sunshine!

The theatre suite is downstairs at basement level in the centre and you are first taken into a small room with the nurse who gives you 6 tablets to take orally plus checking blood pressure etc. Even before you leave the room, you start to feel very chilled out and a bit woozy. You are asked to wear comfortable clothes and no underwired bras etc (ans jewellery is removed) as they attach a special machine via a sticker on your hip to prevent bruising. You are given a lovely shower cap, slippers and gown in a lovely shade of blue to wear. Dr. DS comes in and spends a while measuring and checking and drawing on your eyelids in pen. At this point, due to the medication, I was feeling very sleepy.

Eventually, you are taken next door to theatre, which is far from the usual scary scenario and is more like a medical room. You are asked to lie down on the bed and a gown is placed over the top of you. This was the part I was most scared about – the local going in – but I literally felt nothing! Your eyelids start to numb very quickly and feel very heavy. A few accounts on line suggested that you could not physically open your eyelids, but this was not the case for me – they feel heavy but you are definitely able to move them. Dr DS then left me in the room for a while to ensure the local was fully active. The lovely nurse, Alberta, washed my face with a solution, and wrapped up my head in an additional gown – this felt a bit odd as I wasn't expecting it, and it muffled the sounds in the room. You are attached to a heart monitor, which I found very distracting, as it is a constant background beep, but there was also soul music playing, and eventually the heart monitor ceased to factor.

When the procedure actually starts, there is pressure but no feeling/pain at all. I was surprised by the very bright light that shone right through my eyelids – you can wear eye shields under your eyelids if this is a problem but I assume it is much more comfortable without them. There is a burning smell when blood vessels are being cauterised, and I would imagine that this would be a surprise to some people. It can also give you a feeling like a little electric shock, which Dr DS dealt with by giving me a little extra local. If you have any fat being removed, there is more pressure on the actual eyelid for this part, which was a little uncomfortable, but not at all painful – about a 3/10 at worst. If you have watched the procedure on U-tube you are kind of aware of the different stages – I could certainly tell when I was being glued and stitched for example – not because I could feel it, but more that it was the next logical step of the surgery!

When you are done (I was in theatre for an hour) you can open your eyes straight away. It feels stiff and odd but not painful. There is antibiotic cream on the stitch line and there are little knots each side but no actual dressings or tape. You are moved to the recovery room and allowed to drift off with an ice pack on your eyes, which feels wonderful.

My partner was having a coffee next door in the café and was called to come and collect me about 30 minutes post surgery. He was surprised at how I looked – in a good way. Before any swelling sets in you can already see a massive improvement to your eyes, but it does get worse before it gets better again, so savour the first hour post surgery! On the way home, I was feeling a little sore, and took 2 paracetamol tablets and fell asleep in the car. I took two more tablets at bedtime, but that was all the painkillers I needed throughout.

On arriving home, my right eye was seeping a little but that quickly dried up. I was taking Arnica and Vit C as recommended from a week before surgery and carried on until day 10 post surgery, plus the prescribed antibiotics and antibiotic cream but nothing else. I slept propped up on 3 pillows which was actually fine and I slept quite well.

I have been surprised at how quickly I healed. I had my stitches removed on day 6 by Dr DS, who commented that my right eye had healed so fast that the stitches were a little buried in the skin. Removing them pulls a little but is not painful. It is like a long running stitch that is removed from one end and pulled through. You will notice a huge difference when the stitches are removed – your eyes feel much less tight and healing progresses even more quickly. 24 hours after the stitches are removed you are able to wear make up again – OMG the forgotten joy of mascara!

So here I am after 2 weeks. The scars are a little red and raised but are easily hidden with concealer and are already in the crease of your eyelid, so really not an issue. My eyes look like me, only younger and less tired – this was very important to me. I did not want to look unnatural or weirdly ‘surprised’! I would say to anyone considering this procedure that it is absolutely worth doing if you enter into it with the right attitude and expectation. Dr DS is a very experienced and professional facial surgeon whom I would highly recommend. Hopefully my account will help others to understand the process and the outcome more fully and dispel some of the myths out there!