Going home after your vitreo-retinal surgery

This leaflet explains more about returning to your everyday activities after your vitreo-retinal surgery. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

When can I leave hospital?
If you had a local anaesthetic for your surgery, you can expect to leave hospital about one hour after the surgery. If you had a general anaesthetic or sedation, you can expect to stay in hospital for at least two hours after your surgery, until you are fully alert.

Before you leave hospital your nurse will want to check that;
- your blood pressure is stable
- your temperature is normal
- your blood glucose (sugar) level is stable (if you have diabetes)
- any pain and discomfort is well controlled
- a responsible adult is able to take you home.

If you had a general anaesthetic, your nurse will also want to check that;
- you have passed urine
- a responsible adult will be staying with you for at least 24 hours after you leave hospital.

If you had a local anaesthetic, you do not need someone to stay with you at home, but please make sure that you have access to a telephone in case of an emergency.

After I leave hospital
You can eat and drink as normal when you leave hospital.

If you had a general anaesthetic you may feel tired and have a sore throat. Some patients may also feel sick or be sick but this is very rare.

For 48 hours after your surgery, it is important that you follow the safety advice below. This is because your reasoning, reflexes, judgement and coordination skills can be affected even though you may feel fine. Please rest at home for a minimum of 24 hours after your anaesthetic and do not go to work or school on the day after surgery. It is important that you follow the advice and instructions that the doctors and nurses have given you.
For 48 hours after surgery do not:
- drive any vehicle, including a bicycle
- operate machinery
- cook, use sharp utensils or pour hot liquids
- drink alcohol
- smoke
- take sleeping tablets
- make any important decisions or sign any contracts.

Please note that you do not need to follow these instructions if you have had local anaesthetic without sedation.

Will I have a dressing over my eye?
Yes. You must leave this on until you return to the hospital the next day – we will make an appointment for you before you leave the hospital after your surgery.

Please note that you cannot drive while the dressing is in place as you will not be able to see well enough with one eye.

Looking after my wound
Once your dressing is removed, you will need to use eye drops. We will tell you when and how to use them. If your eyelids are sticky, you can clean them with water that has been boiled and cooled, and a clean swab. The nurse will teach you how to do this. Your wound does not need any other specific care. Your eye may be red and the pupil dilated (bigger) after the dressing is removed, but this should settle down within a week.

You may be advised to wear an eye shield at night or when taking a shower for two weeks after the procedure. This is to prevent you from rubbing your eye or getting it wet. If this is the case, we will give you more information.

Will I be in pain?
Most patients are not in pain or need to take painkillers.

If you have stitches in your wound, you may feel as if you have something in your eye. This is a bit like the feeling you get when you have an eyelash in your eye. The stitches dissolve about a week after the operation and the feeling of having something in your eye should clear quickly. If it becomes unbearable at any time, please contact the Eye Casualty to speak to a nurse or doctor (contact details are at the end of the leaflet).

Very occasionally, raised pressure in the eye may lead to an ache but you can take painkillers to control this. If the pain does not get better after two or three hours, please go to your local Eye Casualty or the Emergency Department (A&E) at St Thomas’ Hospital.

Will I need to do any specific exercises?
You may be asked to do posturing exercises. If this is the case, we will tell you how to do them. You will receive a copy of our leaflet, Recovering from your vitreo-retinal surgery – posturing instructions. If you have not, please ask a member of staff for a copy.
**When can I return to normal activities?**

Before you leave the hospital, the doctor or nurse will tell you about anything that you need to avoid.

- You can read, write and watch TV after surgery.
- You can bathe and shower as normal.
- You can wash your hair or go to the hairdressers but make sure that shampoo, hair dye or other products do not get into the eye.
- If you have to posture, you will have to do this for 50 minutes in every hour for about 10 to 14 days. You will have 10 minutes in every hour during which you are able to undertake light activities, such as reading and writing.
- Take extra care when walking around so that you do not trip.
- You can go out but avoid situations where your eye may be accidentally struck, for example very crowded places, for two weeks after your surgery. You should also avoid contact sports, such as rugby or martial arts.
- Avoid situations where you may get dust or dirt in your eye, such as gardening, for two weeks.
- Do not wear eye make for two weeks.
- We advise you not to drive for two weeks after the procedure. If gas has been injected in your eye to support the retina, you will not be able to drive for about six to eight weeks. This is because of the effects the gas may have on your eye during that time. You should check with your doctor before you start to drive again.
- If you have gas in your eye, you cannot fly until the gas has been absorbed in your system. This usually takes about six to eight weeks.
- Don’t go swimming for six weeks after your operation. This is because of the risk of infection.

**What should I look out for at home?**

If you experience any of the following;

- severe pain after surgery that does not get better within two or three hours
- increasing redness or pain in the operated eye days or weeks after surgery
- decrease in vision – if your vision gets worse after your initial follow-up appointment the day after surgery.

Please report to the Eye Casualty at St Thomas’ Hospital (Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm), or the Emergency Department (A&E) at St Thomas’ if it is out of hours or during weekend. Alternatively, you can go to your local Emergency Department if you live very far but your local service must contact us for advice (contact details are included below).

**Will I have a follow-up appointment?**

You will need to return to the hospital the day after your surgery. This is so we can remove your dressing and examine your eye. The clerk/nurse will make an appointment for you before you leave the hospital.

You will then have a follow-up appointment two weeks after your surgery to check your progress. You should expect to have another appointment, but the timing of this will depend on your condition.
Is there anything else I need to know?
If you need to have a general anaesthetic for any reason following your vitrectomy, it is important that you tell your doctor and the anaesthetist that you have a gas bubble in your eye.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns following your surgery, please contact the Eye Casualty on 020 7188 4336 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm). Out of hours, please call the hospital switchboard on 020 7188 7188 and ask to speak to the eye doctor on call.

Out of hours, please contact the eye doctor on call via switchboard 020 7188 7188
For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk:

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. t: 111

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. w: www.nhs.uk

Was this leaflet useful?
We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or e: patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk