Strabismus Surgery

The eye doctor may recommend strabismus surgery to help align your child’s eyes. During surgery, certain eye muscles are adjusted. This helps the muscles better control how the eye moves. Often, surgery is done in addition to other treatments. In most cases, children who have strabismus surgery go home the same day.

How Surgery Works

Strabismus surgery is a safe, common operation. Be assured, the eyeball isn’t removed from its socket. The eye doctor simply changes the placement or length of an eye muscle. This small change can pull the eye into proper alignment. The two most common methods of surgery are:

- Recession, in which a muscle is moved to a new position on the eye.
- Resection, in which a section of an eye muscle is removed.

Before Surgery

A few days before surgery, your child may have an eye exam so the doctor can double-check eye measurements. On the day of surgery your child:

- Can wear favorite pajamas and bring a toy along.
- Should not have anything to eat or drink. The doctor can tell you more.
- Will be given medication that makes him or her sleepy. Surgery won’t start until your child is asleep.

After Surgery

Each child reacts to surgery in his or her own way. Some children may be afraid to open their eyes at first. Children are often sleepy or cranky for several hours after surgery. If your child’s response concerns you, talk to the eye doctor. After surgery your child:

- May have a red eye. This will go away after several weeks.
- Will most likely not need any pain medication. Recovering from strabismus surgery is not painful for most children.
- May still need other treatment, such as glasses or a patch.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child’s eye doctor if:

- Your child’s eyelid is very swollen.
- A pus-like discharge comes from the eye. (A few bloody tears are normal.)
- Your child vomits more than once.
- Your child has a fever:
  - In a child 3 to 36 months, a rectal temperature of 102°F (39.0°C) or higher
  - In a child of any age who has a temperature of 103°F (39.4°C) or higher
  - A fever that lasts more than 24-hours in a child under 2 years old, or for 3 days in a child 2 years or older
  - Your child has had a seizure caused by the fever

Risks and Complications

- As with any operation, strabismus surgery has risks. These include:
- The eyes not being perfectly aligned. Some children need further surgery to adjust this.
- Bleeding in or around the eye.
- Infection of the eye.
- Risks of anesthesia (the use of medication that makes your child sleep during surgery). The doctor can tell you more about these.