

# Enucleation

---

This material will help you understand your enucleation procedure and what you can expect.

## **What is enucleation?**

Enucleation is a surgery that removes the entire eye. It may be recommended due to severe eye injury, pain in a blind eye, severe infection, or as a treatment for some eye tumors.

## **What should I expect before my surgery?**

Before the surgery, your eye doctor will give you a thorough evaluation to make sure the surgery is right for you. S/he will talk about the potential risks of the surgery and answer any questions you may have. Your doctor will also give you special instructions on how to best prepare for the surgery.

Enucleation is an outpatient procedure, so you will be able to go home the same day. Be sure to arrange for a responsible adult to come with you, stay during surgery, and take you home. You cannot drive for 24 hours after surgery because of the anesthesia.

## **What should I expect on the day of my surgery?**

On the day of the surgery, you should check in on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Kellogg Eye Center (Brehm Tower). You will meet your nurses, anesthesiologists, and operating room team.

During the surgery, the doctor will remove your eye and replace it with an implant. The implant is a sphere made of silicone, plastic, or other material. It is attached to the eye muscles, so it will be able to move with your other eye. Next, the doctor will bury the implant into the eye cavity and cover it with mucosal membrane (conjunctival) that coats the inside of your eyelid. As your final artificial eye is not available at this time, the doctor will place a clear conformer (a clear plastic shell) over the implant to help the eye socket keep its shape. Your doctor may stitch your eyelids closed to prevent the implant from coming out, and will then bandage your eye.

### **What should I expect after the surgery?**

You will be able to go home the same day as your surgery. You will likely have pain for the first few days. Some people also complain of having a dull headache for about two weeks after surgery. Your doctor will prescribe a pain-reliever and anti-nausea medication. S/he will also recommend eye ointment and/or drops. Follow your doctor's instructions on what medicine to take.

You can remove your bandage 6-14 days after surgery. If you would like, you can wear a patch over your eye until you receive your prosthesis. Do not worry if the conformer falls out. Just wash it with soap and water and reinsert it between your eyelids. If you are not comfortable putting it back in yourself, you may call the clinic or on-call doctor to replace it for you. Your local eye doctor may reinsert it for you, as well.

As you are healing, be careful not to get any dirt or debris in your eye or go swimming. Do not clean or rub the inside of your eye. Keep your head elevated to reduce pressure. You should also try to avoid any strenuous activity, such as heavy lifting, for a few weeks. Your doctor will want to follow up with you about 4 to 6 weeks after your procedure. This will help detect any complications that would need more treatment.

## **What is an artificial eye or prosthesis?**

After the surgery you will be fitted for an artificial eye, known as a prosthesis. A prosthesis is custom made by an ocularist to fit in your eye socket and be held in place by your eyelids. It is painted to match the color of your other eye and can be easily removed.

You will have about 3 appointments to fit your prosthesis. The first appointment will be about 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery. During this visit, the ocularist will take an impression and mold of your eye socket. The ocularist will then use this mold to create a prosthesis that matches the curves of your socket. He/she will also begin painting the prosthesis. You will receive the prosthesis on the second visit and will be given instructions on how to care for it. About one month after you have been wearing your prosthesis, you will have a third appointment to see if any adjustments are needed.

## **Are there any risks or complications of the surgery?**

Like all surgeries, enucleation has some risks. In the short-term, complications may include:

- Redness and swelling
- Pain or nausea not relieved with medication
- Yellow, foul smelling discharge
- Fever of 100.5° or greater
- Bleeding

Long-term complications of enucleation include:

- Discharge
- Irritation of the eye socket
- Exposure of the implant

In some cases, people require additional surgeries years after their enucleation. This can happen if the eyelid loosens from wearing a prosthesis or tissue in the eye socket breaks down.

If you notice any signs of a complication, call your doctor right away. If you call the clinic after clinic hours, you will be told how to get in touch with the eye doctor on call. There is an eye doctor on call every day of the year.

**For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.**



<http://www.eyecancer.com/conditions-and-treatments/treatments/3/enucleation-surgery-removal-of-the-eye>

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Kristin Mauer, MPH Candidate and Kathleen Koviak, MPH Candidate  
Reviewers: Diane Neelands, RN, Hakan Demirci, MD and Gale Oren, MILS

Unless otherwise noted, Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Last Revised 04/2015