New Vance Thompson Vision Guide Addresses Droopy Eyelids and Insurance Coverage for Alexandria Patients

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Drooping eyelids are corrected according to what is causing the droop, and the cause determines both the operation and whether insurance is likely to pay for it. Excess skin resting on the upper lid is addressed with upper blepharoplasty. A drooping lid caused by weakness or stretching in the eyelid muscle is addressed with ptosis repair. A low brow contributing to heaviness above the eye may call for a brow lift instead, and more than one of these can be present at once.

Coverage follows the same logic. Insurance may pay for functional eyelid procedures when visual impairment or another medical reason is documented, which can include upper blepharoplasty, ptosis repair, and eyelid repair where lid position is affecting the visual field, comfort, or eye health. Cosmetic eyelid surgery, lower blepharoplasty, and laser skin treatments are ordinarily paid out of pocket. Because the determination rests on documented findings, a consultation and evaluation are needed to establish which category a given case falls into.

Those distinctions are set out at length in a new resource from Vance Thompson Vision, Eyelid Surgery & Oculoplastics in Alexandria: Functional & Cosmetic Options With Dr. Ristvedt, published on the

practice website and medically reviewed by Deborah Gess Ristvedt, DO, who performs eyelid and oculoplastic surgery at the Alexandria clinic. The guide serves patients across Alexandria, Fergus Falls, Morris, Glenwood, and Detroit Lakes.

On the question of medical necessity, the guide describes the changes that tend to signal a functional problem rather than an aesthetic one. Among them are upper eyelids that come to rest at or near the lash line and the compensating habits patients develop without noticing, such as raising the eyebrows or tilting the head back to clear the line of sight. It also identifies persistent watering, chronic irritation or redness, and lids that make contact with the surface of the eye. Two conditions receive separate treatment in the guide: entropion, in which the lid turns inward and the lashes rub against the eye, and ectropion, in which the lid turns outward and leaves the eye exposed. Both can irritate the eye and affect corneal health, and both may follow aging, muscle changes, prior injury, or altered facial nerve function. The guide also notes that a lesion near the eye that changes in size, color, shape, or texture warrants prompt evaluation.

On recovery, the guide indicates that the answer varies by procedure. Many eyelid surgeries involve a comparatively short downtime, with swelling and bruising most pronounced in the first week or two and healing continuing gradually over the weeks that follow. Patients may be given medication or ointment for the recovery period and may be asked to suspend contact lens wear, makeup, strenuous activity, or certain skincare products for a defined interval. The guide observes that when laser skin treatment is combined with eyelid surgery, the two recovery periods can overlap, which some patients prefer over scheduling the procedures separately.

The guide also catalogs the procedures available at the Alexandria clinic, including upper and lower blepharoplasty, ptosis repair, brow lift options ranging from injectable treatments to surgical procedures, entropion and ectropion correction, removal of lesions near the eye, and laser skin rejuvenation.

Dr. Ristvedt is a board-certified ophthalmologist whose practice spans advanced cataract surgery, minimally invasive glaucoma surgery, and oculoplastic surgery. She serves on the Glaucoma Clinical Committee of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, serves as principal investigator on clinical trials involving glaucoma surgical devices and intraocular lens technology, and is a board member of the Central Global Vision Fund. A third-generation eye surgeon and an Alexandria native, she has practiced in the community since 2011, continuing a family practice her grandfather Lowell Gess opened in 1975 and which joined Vance Thompson Vision in 2018.

"The distinction between functional and cosmetic is not one most patients arrive knowing how to make, and it is not always obvious at the first visit," said Deborah Gess Ristvedt, DO, board-certified ophthalmologist, Vance Thompson Vision ? Alexandria. "Someone comes in unhappy with how tired they look and turns out to have lost part of their upper field. Someone else comes in about their vision and is glad to look more rested

afterward. The examination is what sorts it out, which is why the evaluation matters more than the label a patient starts with."

The full resource is available on the Vance Thompson Vision website. The Alexandria clinic can be located on Google Maps.

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