Denver Eyelid Specialists
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Informed Consent for Temporal artery biopsy surgery

What can cause the need for temporal artery (scalp artery) biopsy surgery?

There is a disease called giant cell arteritis. It an immune system disease where the body attacks the blood vessels in the body. Sometimes, it can attack the blood vessels to the eye causing blindness. There are certain symptoms of giant cell arteritis such as headache, eye pain, vision loss, scalp tenderness. There are certain blood tests that can alert the doctor that the patient has a higher risk of temporal arteritis. Treatment consists of long term IV or oral steroid treatment but a biopsy of the temporal artery is needed.

What is an temporal artery biopsy surgery?

When Dr Thiagarajah performs an TEMPORAL ARTERY BIOPSY SURGERY he shaves a small area of the hair in the side of the patient's head. He then uses an ultrasound to identify the artery and makes an incision in the skin to find and expose the artery. He removes a 2 cm length of the artery after tying it off to prevent bleeding and then closes the skin with a suture.

How will temporal artery biopsy surgery affect my vision or appearance?

A biopsy of the scalp artery should not cause vision loss. That being said there are rare cases where the scalp or temporal artery that is being biopsied carries indirect blood to the eye. For patients who have vision loss already, the biopsy does nothing to bring back any vision. It is simply a method of confirming the diagnosis of temporal arteritis.

What are the major risks?

Risks of TEMPORAL ARTERY BIOPSY SURGERY include risk of vision loss, stroke, bleeding, facial nerve damage, scarring, infection. The biopsy results can come back without a clear diagnosis resulting in a need for another biopsy on the other side. You may need additional treatment or surgery to treat these complications; the cost of the additional treatment or surgery is NOT included in the fee for this surgery. Due to individual differences in anatomy, response to surgery, and wound healing, no guarantees can be made as to your final result.

What are the alternatives?

It is possible to do nothing and choose to be treated with steroids for temporal arteritis even though the doctors are not sure that is the cause of the symptoms or vision loss. The steroids carry risks of high blood pressure, increasing blood sugar, hip damage so we routinely test patients with a biopsy before starting them on the medication. However, it is possible to be treated without the biopsy knowing there is a risk that the patient does not have temporal arteritis and the steroids may do nothing.

What type of anesthesia is used? what are the major risks?

Most TEMPORAL ARTERY BIOPSY SURGERY surgeries are done with “local” anesthesia, that is, injections around the eye to numb the area. You may also receive sedation from a needle placed into a vein in your arm or pills taken before surgery. Sometimes general anesthesia is used where the patient is completely asleep with a tube down the throat. Risks of anesthesia include but are not limited to damage to the eye and surrounding tissue and structures, loss of vision, breathing problems, and, in extremely rare circumstances, stroke or death.

Patient’s acceptance of risks

I have read the above information and have discussed it with my physician. I understand that it is impossible for the physician to inform me of every possible complication that may occur. My physician has told me that results cannot be guaranteed, that adjustments and more surgery may be necessary, and that there are additional costs associated with more treatment. By signing below, I agree that my physician has answered all of my questions, that I understand and accept the risks, benefits, and alternatives of TEMPORAL ARTERY BIOPSY SURGERY, and the costs associated with this surgery and future treatment, and that I feel I will be able to accept changes in my appearance.

Patient (or person authorized to sign for patient)

Date