



COMMONWEALTH

FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS - FACE LIFT

The following instructions are based on experience with many facelift operations. They will answer many questions that may arise after your surgery. You and your caregiver should read them several times so that you become familiar with them. Please follow these instructions faithfully; those who do so have the smoothest postoperative course and more satisfactory results.

***For the first 72 hours after surgery you should not be alone. Please arrange for a family member, friend, or caregiver to be available during this time.

SWELLING

Any operation is accompanied by swelling of the surrounding tissues. The amount varies from person to person, but it always seems more prominent in the face. Swelling may be more noticeable after the first postoperative day. It may be more pronounced along the jaw line, and is generally most noticeable in the morning after you first wake up. This swelling is normal. It is not serious, and is to be expected after your surgery.

The main thing to remember is that swelling eventually subsides. You can help decrease the swelling in the following ways:

1. Sit, stand, and walk as much as you can after you leave the hospital. Staying in an upright position can decrease the tendency for swelling.
2. When you need to look from side to side, move your shoulders and head as one unit, as though you had a stiff neck. The healing process of the tiny sutures (or stitches) will be sufficient after two weeks for you to move your head normally again. Do not move your neck from side to side.
3. It is always a good idea not to use your back when lifting heavy objects. For at least a week after surgery, bend at your knees, not at your waist, to lift light objects that are below waist level. If an object is in the least bit heavy, ask a family member to lift and carry it for you.
4. For your own comfort and to aid the healing process, be especially careful not to bump your face and neck. Sleeping alone for one week after surgery will help insure that you rest comfortably.
5. Sleep with the head of your bed elevated for one week after your surgery. To accomplish this, place two or three pillows under the head of the mattress. For the first three days after surgery, do not put a pillow under your head, but put your head flat on the mattress, with the mattress plumped up by the pillows underneath it. Sleeping on your face tends to tear down the supporting stitches used under the skin. Therefore, it is necessary to sleep on your back for 3-4 weeks. Some patients find a reclining chair placed at a 45 degree angle to be more comfortable.
6. Supporting the face and chin with a chin sling aids healing and protects the face and ears from undue stress. Wear the chin sling constantly for one week after your operation. After this, the sling should be worn at night until 30 days after your surgery. It is also beneficial to wear the sling during the day when you are alone during this 30 day period.
7. You can continue to use ice compresses in the exposed areas of your face such as you were using at the hospital. They may help with the discoloration and swelling, as well as minor discomfort, for a few days after you leave the hospital.
8. Avoid straining during bowel movements. If you need a laxative, your pharmacist can suggest an over the counter preparation.
9. Protect your face from the sun with a sunscreen for at least one month; it is always a good idea to wear sunscreen to keep harmful rays from intensifying the aging process.
10. Remember - report any sudden increase in swelling to us.
11. Please have a family member or friend with you the first day and night home from the hospital. Report any confusion or altered mental status immediately to us.
12. On your first day home from the hospital be sure to keep hydrated, drink at least one 16oz Gatorade bottle in addition to additional fluids.

DISCOLORATION

It is not unusual to have varying amounts of discoloration about the face. Like swelling, it may become more pronounced, especially in the neck, after the first day or so. Remember, this is temporary. It usually lasts no more than two weeks, and it decreases in intensity all the time.

The instructions given for decreasing swelling will also help the discoloration; however, there is no medication that will cause it to disappear rapidly. You can camouflage the discoloration to some extent by using makeup, and a concealer used around the eyes can help cover bruises. **DO NOT APPLY MAKEUP OVER THE INCISIONS UNTIL SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE SUTURES HAVE BEEN REMOVED.** You can apply makeup within 1/4" of the incision lines, however.

DISCOMFORT

You can take the pain medication which we will have prescribed for you. Under **NO** circumstances should you take any medicines containing aspirin or salicylates. Be sure to check the labels of any pain medication you have, or that you purchase from the drug store.

If you have a sudden onset of pain or a feeling of tightness around the incisions, especially if it is particularly strong on one side, call the office.

OOZING

If you notice bright red oozing coming through the bandages, go to bed, elevate your head, apply ice compresses to your face and neck, and call the office. We will give you further instructions when you call.

TEMPERATURE

Generally, your temperature will not rise very much above 100 degrees after your facelift; this rise is due to the healing process. It is common to feel that your temperature is increased after surgery, but this is usually not the case. To be sure, you should measure your temperature by mouth. Report any persistent temperature above 100 degrees to the office.

WEAKNESS

It is not unusual after you have had an anesthetic or any type of operation to feel weak, have palpitations, break out in "cold sweats", or feel dizzy. This gradually clears up after a few days without medication.

INSOMNIA

We will have prescribed a sedative for you in case you have difficulty sleeping after your operation. It is important to remember that such drugs can make some people feel light headed and weak. You should only take this if you need it.

DEPRESSION

It is not unusual for you to go through a period of mild depression after cosmetic surgery. No matter how much you wanted the operation, the postoperative swelling and bruising can be disappointing. Be patient. The bruising and swelling will subside quickly, and your surgical result will be evident.

NUMBNESS

Parts of the face, neck, and ears will sometimes feel weak/numb after a facelift. This is temporary, and will gradually go away.

TIGHTNESS OF THE FACE

The skin of your face may feel tight, and you may feel that it interferes with your smile. This will disappear within a few

weeks.

INJURIES TO YOUR FACE

You may have some kind of accidental blow to your face during the early postoperative phase. This actually does happen to many people. You don't need to be too concerned, unless the blow is hard, or if you have hemorrhaging or swelling afterwards. If you do have these symptoms, call the office. Otherwise, just mention it to us at your next visit.

THINNING OF THE HAIR

You may temporary experience some thinning of the hair in some areas by the suture lines in the temple and behind the ear.

MEDICATIONS

As we mentioned before, a prescription for pain and one for sleep have been ordered for you. Take these only if you feel you need them. Take ALL of your antibiotics until you run out.

After we remove your dressing, you should clean the incisions with hydrogen peroxide two or three times a day. You should then apply the antibiotic ointment we prescribed for you with a Q-tip to the incisions. Keep the incisions thoroughly covered with the ointment until we tell you to stop using it.

INCISIONS

After all your stitches have been removed, the incisions will be a deep pink. There will be varying amounts of swelling in and around the incisions themselves. With time, the pink will become white, and the firmness of the scars will soften, making them less noticeable. Everyone heals at a different rate, but it takes approximately one year for all the changes to occur.

THE POSTOPERATIVE PERIOD

When you come out of the anesthesia after your surgery, you will have a large, bulky dressing. This will remain in place for about 24 hours after your surgery. If your dressing begins to feel very tight or uncomfortable, report it to us. You may also have a plastic drain behind each ear. If you do have drains, they will be removed the evening after your surgery, or at your first postoperative visit to the office the day after your surgery. Call us if one of the drain reservoirs fully fills with blood. You should be as quiet as possible during this time. A great deal of talking and having too many visitors is discouraged.

At your first postoperative visit, we will remove your dressing, remove drains if you have them, change your bandages, clean your incisions, and apply ointment. You will probably feel much better after this visit. At no time should you try to remove any sutures or disturb any crusting yourself. If you are bothered by something after your surgery, call us or tell us about it at one of your postop visits.

On the fourth or fifth postoperative day, we may begin to remove some sutures.

On the seventh or eighth postoperative day, we will remove the sutures around your ears and some of the staples in the scalp. You may want to wear makeup at this time, but remember not to apply it directly on the incisions.

Between your tenth and twelfth postoperative days, we will remove the rest of the staples. After this visit, you can wash your hair, but avoid straining your neck. Please do not visit your hairdresser or color your hair for three weeks after your surgery.

We will see you again for a three week visit. By this time, you will already be somewhat familiar with the "new you". After this visit, you can see your hairdresser for a professional styling.

Two months after your surgery, we will take photographs and monitor your healing. We will also be doing this at intervals during the following months.

POSTOPERATIVE CARE

Following your surgery, we will want to see you in the office at regularly scheduled intervals to monitor your progress.

RESUMING ACTIVITIES

1. GLASSES AND CONTACT LENSES - Eye glasses may be worn as soon as bandages are removed. Contact lenses may be inserted the day after surgery.
2. HAIR AND BODY CARE - We will wash your hair in the office five days after your surgery. The antibiotic ointment will eventually wash out, we assure you.
 - You can use cotton balls to wash your face gently after the first week. Use a mild soap and wash with a gentle, upward motion.
 - You can take a shower by the fourth postoperative day, but NEVER take one on a day after you have sutures removed.
 - Do NOT tweeze eyebrows for one week after your surgery.
3. HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES - You can be up and around with your usual activities, except for lifting heavy objects.
4. CLOTHING - For **two weeks** after surgery, wear clothing that doesn't have to be pulled over your head.
5. ATHLETICS - For six weeks after your surgery, do not swim, perform any kind of strenuous athletic activity, or perform any exercises that involve turning the head.
6. KEEPING A STIFF FACE AND BACK - Move your face and neck as little as possible after your surgery to help your skin heal faster to the underlying tissues. To help achieve this, you should do the following.
 7. Avoid excessive smiling.
 8. Do NOT bend your head forward or backward for two weeks.
 9. Avoid gum and foods that are hard to chew. Easily chewed foods such as soup, mashed potatoes, stewed chicken, and hamburger are allowed. Stay away from steaks, French bread and other hard to chew foods for at least one week.
 10. Avoid yawning with your mouth opened widely for at least one week.
 11. Turn your head with your neck and shoulders as one unit. For two weeks, move your head as though you had a crick in your neck.
12. DRIVING - Do not drive a car for at least 2 weeks after surgery, because you should not be in a situation where you have to turn your head.
13. RETURNING TO WORK AND RESUMING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES - When you return to work depends upon the amount of physical activity and public contact your job involves, and also the amount of swelling and discoloration you develop. Many patients return to work and go out socially two or three weeks after their surgery. As soon as you are comfortable with your new appearance, let others enjoy it too.

FINALLY

Remember the things you were told before your operation:

When your bandages are first removed, your face will be swollen, and you will have some amount of discoloration. The swelling will be mostly gone within two weeks; however, it will take six to eight weeks for all of the swelling to disappear.

The discoloration will gradually disappear over a period of ten to fourteen days in most cases.

Report any of the following to the office:

- Temperature elevation
- Sudden swelling or discoloration
- Excessive bleeding
- Yellowish discharge from the wound
- Development of any drug reaction
- Increased pain or feeling of tightness
- Confusion

Most of all, be PATIENT during the healing process. The results will be worth the wait. If you have any further questions, we urge you to call us at (804) 378-7443.