



## Face Lift Notes

**Dressings:** The bulky dressing placed at the time of facelift surgery puts some pressure on the areas operated on and helps soak up any external drainage of normally occurring serum and blood. If the dressing is too tight or causes pain, please call our office at (808) 521-1999 to talk to the surgeon or nurse. You may be instructed to cut part way or completely through the portion of the dressing under the chin. This will usually relieve the discomfort. Removing the entire dressing will not cause any problems, in the unlikely event that this seems to be necessary. We remove the bulky dressing the morning after facelift surgery and replace it with a very light one, which you will remove the following day. After that, you are given a dressing that can easily be applied and removed.

**Position:** Keeping your head elevated as much as possible will help to reduce postoperative facelift swelling. If you can, sleep on two or three pillows to keep your head above the level of your heart.

**Drains:** Most patients do not require a drain. However if you do require a drain, a small drain may be placed under the skin and brought out through a small incision made in the temple on each side of your face. These drains evacuate the fluid that accumulates after facelift surgery and enable you to heal faster.

**Bleeding:** Small amounts of oozing and bleeding after facelift surgery are normal. The bulky dressing may be stained and the size of the stain may enlarge after you go home, this is normal. If serious bleeding occurs after the facelift, apply pressure and call us. Bleeding under the skin flaps that causes serious swelling and discomfort is very uncommon, but if it does occur, it requires attention and evaluation; please call our office at (808) 521-1999 to talk to the surgeon or nurse.

**Sutures:** The sutures in front of your ears will be removed 5-7 days after facelift surgery. If you have had an incision made under your chin, those sutures also will be removed at that time. The staples within the hair and the sutures behind the ear are removed 7-10 days after facelift surgery.

**Sunscreen and Makeup:** It is imperative that your scars be protected from the sun for a good 6 months after facelift surgery. Use a sunscreen with a skin-protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 at all times. It should be applied before your makeup. You may begin applying makeup after your sutures are removed. Speak to our nursing staff or the front office about a skin care appointment several weeks after facelift surgery. We provide this service to help you maximize the benefits of your "new look."



**Skin Care:** All the skin of the face and neck may feel dry and chapped after facelift surgery. We recommend that you make frequent and liberal use of a good moisturizer without fragrances in it.

**Hair Care:** After a facelift, most patients experience a temporary change in the texture and manageability of their hair. Your hair is reacting to the "shock" of facelift surgery and will recover naturally within 6 weeks. If you color or perm your hair, plan to have it done before facelift surgery or wait until 6 weeks afterward for the best results. Your hair will be a little "lifeless" during that period of time.

**Shampoo:** After the dressings are removed the day after facelift surgery or 24 hours after the drains have been removed, you may wash your hair. Using conditioner first will help loosen any accumulated blood and make washing your hair easier. You may prefer to have your hairdresser wash it for you. In either case, a hair dryer, if used at all, should be kept on the lowest heat setting, as your scalp may be partially numb.

## Healing from Facelift Surgery Information

**Numbness:** When the skin is separated from the underlying tissues during facelift surgery, small sensory nerves are cut. Varying degrees of numbness will be present after surgery and will improve gradually as the nerves reconnect to the skin. This process can take from 2 months for face, neck, and cheeks to 9-12 months for the forehead and scalp.

**Tightness:** Frequently there is a tight feeling in the neck and lower face after a facelift. During facelift surgery, not only the skin, but the underlying muscles are tightened to create a better and longer lasting result. Additionally, the swelling will move downward in the first week and the neck will feel even tighter. Do not be alarmed! You will not choke, and the sensation will decrease during the first month.

**Healing of Sensory Nerves:** As the nerves regenerate, itching, burning, tingling, and shooting sensations (zingers) will occur. Ice, moisturizers, and gentle massaging are helpful during this phase of the facelift healing process.

**Firmness Underneath the Skin:** Some degree of firmness or lumpiness under the skin is normal after facelift surgery and will resolve with time. Local massage will speed resolution of this problem, which normally takes 2-4 months to disappear completely.



**Asymmetric Swelling:** Do not be alarmed if one side of your face is slightly more swollen or numb than the other. This is common and usually disappears within a few weeks after a facelift.

**Eye Symptoms:** Your eyelids may feel tight even if they have not been operated on, because of the swelling that occurs in the entire face. Your vision may also be blurred from the ointment that is placed in them for protection during facelift surgery. Eye drops and ice packs will feel particularly soothing for the first few days after facelift surgery.

**Activities:** Most patients who have had a facelift feel reasonably normal within 3-4 days after surgery even though they are swollen. If you wish to do light office work, you may. Do not, however, do any heavy activities or aerobic exercise for at least 3 weeks after facelift surgery! Strenuous activities can cause bleeding and swelling for a longer period than is necessary. Prior to resuming your exercise program, please ask our office staff to ensure that it is safe for you to do so.

**Bruising:** Bruising may persist for several weeks. This is dependent on your bruising tendencies. Ice packs during the first 72 hours are most helpful in decreasing the amount of bruising. Drinking pineapple juice can help bruises absorb more quickly once they have formed. Drinking one glass of pineapple juice or eating a serving of fresh pineapple a day is very helpful to a large percentage of patients. When the bruises turn to yellow/green getting a little sun on the area may help break down the bruise. Be sure to wear your sunscreen if you are going to get sun exposure to your surgical sites during the first 6-12 months.

**Jaw Pain:** You may feel tightness in your jaw and neck following surgery. It may be difficult for you to chew or to open your mouth fully. This is normal and will usually resolve itself within the first two weeks after surgery. You may need to follow a soft diet until the discomfort has resolved.

**Chemical Peel:** If you had a chemical peel at the time of your surgery it will make things seem much worse. The chemical peel will make you look more swollen and much tighter than you would if you had the surgery and peel at different times. This tightness and swelling is normal and will resolve within 2-3 weeks of surgery for most people.