

FACTS FOR PATIENTS HAVING A
“FACELIFT”

A “facelift” or rhytidectomy, can improve the most visible signs of aging caused by age, the effects of gravity, exposure to the sun, and the stresses of daily life. The operation consists of removing excess fat, tightening underlying muscles, and redraping the skin of your face and neck. A facelift can be done alone, or in conjunction with other procedures such as a forehead lift, eyelid surgery, or nose reshaping. You should discuss candidly your expectations about looking and feeling better after surgery, but keep in mind that the desired result is improvement. Plastic surgery “slows down the clock, but it does not stop it.”

Here you will find answers to many of the questions that are most often asked concerning a “facelift”. If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask a staff member at (312) 695-6022.

Now for some specific questions:

1. Where will my incisions be?

Incisions usually begin at the temple hairline, carried down in a natural line in front of the ear (or just inside the cartilage at the front of your ear), and continue behind the earlobe to the lower scalp. If the neck needs work, a small incision may also be made under the chin.

2. Will I have stitches?

The number and type of sutures used to close the incisions vary, depending on the surgeon’s judgment. Stitches secure the layers of tissue and close the incisions; metal clips or staples may be used on the scalp. Stitches and staples are removed upon 8-14 days after surgery.

3. Will I have drains?

Following surgery, a small, thin tube may be temporarily placed under the skin behind your ear to drain any blood that might collect there. The drainage tub(s) will be removed 1 to 2 days after surgery.

4. Will I have bandages?

Following surgery your entire head will be bandaged. The bandage may feel tight at first because it is meant to apply an even pressure to your face, neck, and head to minimize bruising and swelling. If it is uncomfortably tight, remove it, and notify your physician.

The bandages are usually removed 1 day after surgery. Upon leaving the hospital, a headscarf is an effective disguise. You may shower and shampoo after the dressings are removed.

5. Will I have scars?

All surgical incisions cause scarring, which is actually nature's way of healing. Scars are hidden in the hairline and behind the ears, except for a small area in front of the ears. Once healed, the hairline scars will fade and become barely visible within 6-8 weeks. While scars are permanent, they are rarely noticeable, nor do they cause complications.

6. Will I be swollen or bruised?

Swelling and bruising of the skin are expected, especially during the first 2 weeks after surgery. Your swelling will increase for the first 48 hours; it will then gradually subside. You may notice an increase in swelling in the morning—this will also slowly subside as the day progresses. It is important with this surgery to remember that before you see the improvement it is intended to provide, you will experience a period of unattractive bruising and swelling.

7. Will I feel “tight”?

Virtually all patients report some tightness and numbness of the face and neck. The tightness generally resolves within 2 months. Some numbness persists for several months with gradual resolution. The feeling of tightness is usually due to swelling. As this recedes, the skin loosens and then stabilizes. This is normal and should not cause alarm.

8. How long will the surgical results last?

How soon you will want or require another operation is highly individualized. On the average, a facelift lasts 7-12 years. Some patients age more rapidly, for one reason or another, and desire another operation in a shorter period of time. There are some who never require a surgery again. Older patients sometimes benefit from a secondary “minilift” or tuck within a year of surgery due to some early relaxation; especially if they are having the procedure for the first and have marked laxity.

9. Why are photographs taken?

“Before” and “After” photographs are done in the office. They are useful in assessing what needs to be done and for reference during surgery.

10. What do I need to do to prepare for surgery?

Lab tests are to be done at least one week in advance, so that we can review the results before surgery. Please let us know if you are taking any medication. Be certain to

AVOID ASPIRIN and aspirin products (Ibuprofen, Vitamin E) for 10 days before and a few days after surgery. Aspirin products interfere with the clotting of blood. As far as preparing for surgery, you are asked to eat a very light breakfast, such as toast and juice. If the surgery is in the morning, NO FOOD or DRINK is to be had after midnight. If you smoke, we ask that you abstain, or at least cut down, before your operation. Alcohol should be used medication.

11. What type of anesthesia is used during the operation?

Two types of anesthesia are available: local with sedation and general anesthesia. Which type is usually decided when we “reserve” your surgical date and is mutually decided on by you and your surgeon. Local with sedation is chosen by most of our patients. Local anesthesia involves numbing the area to be treated, accompanied by supplementary “” medications given at the discretion of the surgeon and depending on how you feel. You will be able to hear and respond to questions and instructions; afterward, however, you will recall little or none of the surgical experience. You can be confident that you will be calm and comfortable during your procedure.

12. How long does the operation last?

The actual operation time may vary, depending upon the amount of work to be done. Usually, a facelift takes approximately 2-4 hours.

13. What does my hospital stay entail?

Admission to the surgical area is approximately 1 hour to your scheduled Operating Room time (e.g. your surgery is scheduled for 7:30 am, you should plan to arrive at 6:30 am). After your surgical procedure, your recovery time is approximately 1 hour. Afterward, you are taken to your hospital room where you will stay for approximately 24 hours. During your hospital stay, you will be visited by your surgeon and/or residents. They will loosen or remove any dressings and check on progress. Upon discharge, please be sure to have arrangements for someone to accompany you home.

Once you are discharged, here are some important facts.

*Keep your head elevated as much as possible, especially for the first 3-5 days. Sleep either on one side or face up with your head higher than your heart by raising the head of the bed.

*Do not bend over for the first week. Bending over may cause dizziness or an uncomfortable fullness, so move cautiously for the first week.

*Monitor your incisions for signs of infection (rare before the third day): spreading redness, excessive swelling, tightness, or drainage, excessive pain, increasing warmth, fever of 100.5 or greater.

*You will experience some pain after your surgery that can be controlled by pain medications prescribed for you. Take this medication as directed. Contact our office if you experience a sudden onset of pain, if the pain is not relieved by the prescribed medication, or you become nauseated after taking it. If the pain and swelling are more severe on one side, this could represent a problem, especially in the first 48 hours after surgery. Contact our office immediately if this should occur.

*Drink plenty of fluids, eat lightly, and rest, especially for the first three days after surgery. Rest is beneficial, but don't regard yourself as an invalid. A common sense approach is recommended. Your body will tell you when you are overdoing it.

* Avoid strenuous activity and rigorous exercise for 1 week.

*You may drive 24 hours after surgery provided you are no longer taking pain medication containing narcotics.

*Avoid smoking for 2 days after surgery.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

*You may wear make-up 3 days after surgery.

*Do not color your hair for 3 weeks after surgery. You may color your hair prior to your surgery.

*You can follow your routine regimen of washing your face.

*Limit your exposure to the sun for 6 weeks after surgery.

*You may experience a brief feeling of "being blue" which is normal. Your appearance and spirits will improve and by 2-3 weeks afterwards, you will be well on your way to realizing benefit from the operation.

More commonly asked questions:

14. When do I return for post-op visit?

Usually 10 days after surgery for suture removal. Many patients return for sutures around the eyes and brow.

15. What type of face care should I implement?

*You can follow your routine regimen of washing your face and shampooing at this point.

*Residual bruising can be covered with make-up. Cover-ups or concealer camouflage make-up is permissible to wear.

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TIME TABLE

Length of hospital stay	Approximately 24 hours
Stitches removed	5-7 days
Staples removed	10-14 days
Office visits	When stitches are removed/1 week later
Return to work	10-14 days