



POST-OPERATIVE FACELIFT CARE

BEFORE SURGERY:

1. Discontinue all **Aspirin** and **Non-steroidal Anti-Inflammatory (NSAIDs)** such as Motrin, Advil, and Aleve for 10 days prior to surgery. These medications may cause excess surgical bleeding and should be avoided. Large amounts of vitamin E and over the counter herbal supplements should likewise be discontinued. Tylenol (Acetaminophen) is the only non-prescription analgesic, which may be used before surgery. If in doubt, ask your surgeon about the medicines you may be taking. Also, if you are on any medications that affect bleeding (**Coumadin/Plavix**) please notify the office immediately.
2. Gather supplies in advance: Gauze pads (2x2 or 4x4), Bacitracin, Polysporin, or a double antibiotic, cotton swabs, cold packs, “artificial tears”, and hydrogen peroxide to clean the incision lines. It is also a good idea to stock up on easy to prepare soft foods for the week following surgery.
3. Refrain from all nicotine products, including cigarettes, pipe tobacco, chew or “the patch”. Nicotine interferes with healthy circulation, can delay healing, and can result in scarring. It also places you at higher risk of complication when receiving anesthesia
4. You will be given prescriptions for after surgery (typically an antibiotic and pain medication).

AFTER SURGERY:

You will have a pressure dressing covering your head and portions of your face. Do not loosen or remove the bandage since it is essential to prevent bleeding. Although the bandage typically feels tight, it provides some measure of comfort by supporting tender tissues. Your surgeon will remove the outer layer dressing 24 hours after surgery. The full dressing will be removed on the 3rd day after surgery and an Ace wrap bandage will be put on for compression, which will remain in place for 1 week. If you experience a sudden increase in pain, notify your surgeon immediately. After 5 days post-op, you may remove the Ace wrap to shower and wash your hair, but it will need to be replaced immediately after.

ACTIVITY:

Rest quietly in bed with your head elevated (or sit in a reclining chair) for the first 48-72 hrs. Unnecessary activity will encourage swelling, bruising, and discomfort, so remain at rest except for visits to the bathroom. Avoid exercise and exertion for the first 2 weeks. **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, wound complications, such as bleeding are more likely when vigorous activity is engaged in too early.

SKIN CARE:

For the first 10 days after the facelift surgery it is very important not to disturb the surgical site. After bathing, gently pat dry with a soft towel rather than wipe or rub dry. Avoid all make-up, moisturizers, or sunscreens until your surgeon approves their use (usually not before 10 days). Avoid sun exposure until all wounds are healed. Do not be surprised if bruising migrates downward to the upper chest. Ultimately you will want to use a skin care program and sunscreens daily to delay further aging of the facial skin.

WOUND CARE:

Generally, only the incision lines surrounding the ear and under the chin will be accessible to care for after the surgery. These areas should be kept clean daily with use of a cotton swab soaked in hydrogen peroxide followed by and application of double antibiotic ointment. 7 days after surgery, the surgical clips, staples, or sutures will be removed in the office. Wound care after that can be discontinued unless otherwise told by the surgeon. Your outward appearance will normalize within 10-14 days, complete healing will take several additional weeks.

MEDICATIONS: You will be given a prescription for pain medication and oral antibiotics. Nearly all prescription pain medications have nausea as a side effect. Consequently, use Tylenol for light discomfort and reserve prescription medication for more persistent pain. Remember that pain will worsen with activity, movement or vomiting so control pain with bed rest and Tylenol.

WHAT TO EXPECT FOLLOWING FACELIFT SURGERY

Certain physical changes are expected following facelift surgery. Some individuals experience all the following and others only some. The degree to which each person is affected is variable and unpredictable.

- **PAIN** - Discomfort is common immediately after surgery, particularly around the ears. If pain is experienced to a greater degree on one side, you will need to call the office.
- **BLEEDING** - Oozing of blood and tissue fluid along the suture/stable lines is normal for several days following surgery. Bleeding that is severe or does not stop within 10 minutes of continuous pressure should be reported to our office.
- **SWELLING** - Facial swelling is expected and may be more pronounced 24-72 hours after surgery than it is immediately following the procedure. The facelift dressing makes this swelling appear to be greater than it really is. Excessive swelling of only ONE side of the face is abnormal and should be reported to our office immediately. Sleeping with your head elevated and sitting upright during the day for several days following surgery will help minimize swelling. Most swelling will gradually resolve in 14 days. Your earlobes will swell more than your face and will go down.
- **BRUISING** – Bruising is normal. The bruises on your face may "fall" onto your neck and upper chest before disappearing. Most bruising will resolve in the first 14 days and may be concealed by makeup after one week.
- **TIGHTNESS** - Facial tightness is greatest in the first several weeks after surgery but may persist to some degree for several months. This is due to subtle swelling in the facial tissues that will subside. Be assured, your face will again feel "normal".
- **ITCHING/NUMBNESS** - Itching along suture lines and in areas adjacent to the face (scalp, forehead) is common and temporary. A feeling that the face, neck, and earlobe are numb also occurs. Normal sensation usually returns within weeks to months.
- **HEAVINESS** - Your face may feel "heavy" for 4-6 weeks following surgery. This is due to swelling and changes that occur with healing. Use of the chin strap will help alleviate this sensation.
- **ASYMMETRY** - For the first several weeks following surgery your face may appear to you to be slightly lopsided. This is because swelling is not symmetrical following surgery and resolves at different rates on different parts of the face. This "unevenness" will settle out as the swelling goes away.
- **HAIR COLORING** – If you color your hair, please color the week prior to your surgery. You will need to check with your physician regarding a time you may apply color or other chemical products after your surgery.
- **UNIVERSAL FACE BAND** – The face band provided to you must always be worn the first week post-op, you may remove it to shower and eat. The second week post op you should wear the face band in the evening and while you are sleeping.

If you have questions or concerns following your surgery please call our office at **907-671-6017** (after hours, ask for ENT doctor on call) or call **911** for emergency.