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Face Lift

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Introduction

Facelift (or rhytidectomy) is a surgical procedure used to improve visible signs of aging of the face and neck.

People who undergo facelift surgery are usually between the ages of 40 and 65.

As a person ages, the skin and muscles of the face and neck begin to lose tone and elasticity. As skin laxity develops with age, so do wrinkles in the skin.

A facelift can improve the visible signs of aging by tightening deeper structures, tightening and re-draping the skin of face and neck, and removing or repositioning selected areas of fat.

A facelift can be performed alone, or in conjunction with other procedures, such as eyelid surgery, browlift, nasal surgery, laser resurfacing or liposuction around the face and neck.

Facelift surgery is individualised for each person and the outcome of surgery is individual depending on the degree of aging, skin quality, lifestyle and the type of procedure performed.

A facelift rejuvenates the face but cannot fully reverse or stop the process of aging.

The procedure

The operation does not tighten as much as can be obtained with fingers in front of a mirror. Nevertheless a significant degree of improvement without an overcorrected look, is the surgical goal.

Facelift surgery usually takes between two and four hours to complete; longer if other procedures are performed at the same time. The skin and underlying muscles are tightened during a facelift procedure. Drains are often used for 24 hours and a full head bandage helps to minimise swelling and bruising. It can be performed in hospital or in a day surgery centre.

Some scars can be expected following a facelift. These scars are carefully placed and the aim is to hide them in the facial creases around the ear and in the hair both above and behind the ear. Scars are usually pink to start with but generally fade and become white, soft over a few weeks or months.

The tension on the face and neck is taken in the hairline. The scars in these regions respond by producing some spreading and a hairdresser will always be able to detect them on close inspection. Hair loss over the scars within the hairline may occur and may be permanent.

Initially the scars in front and behind the ears may be the most noticeable and it is helpful to have a hairstyle that conveniently covers this area.

Sometimes fat is removed from the central neck (double chin area) with liposuction to help contour the neck.

An extra scar is required immediately below the chin if the central neck muscles need tightening or excess fat needs to be removed from this area.

The improvement in the neck region will be a reduction in the amount of loose skin but it will not remove the creases in the neck that are normal and are present from childhood.

Wrinkles on the top and bottom lips and those ingrained at the corners of the mouth and eyes are not affected by facelift surgery.

Other procedures like laser, dermabrasion, injectable fillers or Botox will treat these areas. The forehead is also not included in the facelift procedure.

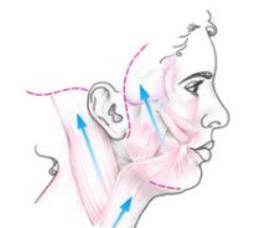
Following surgery your face should retain normal expression. A neck lift (or lower facelift) involves tightening of the muscles of the neck and lower face and the removal of loose skin from the neck.

Recovery

Tightness and swelling around the face and neck can initially be expected. Bruising may last between 5 days and 3 weeks and will often extend into the lower neck and colletage area.

Make-up can be applied after 5 to 10 days when your wounds are dry and the sutures have been removed.

You may require at least 3 weeks off work.



Strenuous activity should be deferred for 6 weeks after surgery.

You may colour or perm your hair after 3 to 6 weeks.

Numbness can be present for 6 weeks or more.

After a few weeks the tissues and skin of the face relax as the swelling subsides and it may appear that the face is beginning to "fall". At the same time some fine wrinkles may also appear to return.

It normally takes 3 to 6 months for the facelift surgery to settle and for your facial appearance will look natural again. It can take up to 12 months for scars to fade.

After the surgery the aging process continues at its natural rate. Some people might request a repeat facelift 5,10 or more years later. It is usually no more difficult than before.

Following a facelift you should not expect to look a different person but merely to look well or better when seen again by friends.

Keep in mind that that satisfaction from the results of facelift surgery is in the visible improvement in your appearance rather than "perfection" or "total rejuvenation". Remember, too, that despite having improved self-esteem your personality and relationships will not change following surgery. A "new" face does not guarantee a "new life"!

Alternative treatments

Facelift surgery is elective surgery and alternative forms of treatment consist of not treating the laxity and wrinkles of the face and neck region with facelift surgery.

Alternative surgical procedures include fat injections to plump up the face where aging has resulted in fat loss and liposuction to reduce fat deposits in the chin.

Improvement in skin laxity, skin wrinkles and fatty deposits may be attempted by other non surgical treatments such as chemical face peels or laser resurfacing.

Injectable treatments with dermal filling agents, such as Restylane, Sculptra, Juvederm as well as Aquamid for longer lasting results and muscle relaxants, such as Botox may help reduce the severity of skin wrinkling but will not affect the skin laxity of the face.

Risk and potential complications are associated with alternative forms of treatment.



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Risks of Surgery

All surgery is associated with some risk

It is important that you understand that there are risks involved with any surgery.

Whilst the majority of individuals undergoing surgery do not experience any complications, a minority do and there cannot be any guarantees in surgery.

With every type of surgery the best possible outcome is sought. The importance of having a highly qualified surgeon and professional surgical team and facility cannot be overestimated.

Risk to benefit

The choice to undergo a surgical procedure should be based on the comparison of the risk to the potential benefit to you. Make sure that you take time to read and understand how each potential complication can impact on your life and try to make the risk to benefit comparison specifically for yourself.

Informed consent process

Before any surgery, your surgeon should explain to you the risks of the procedure and the possible complications that could happen. The informed surgical consent web site will help you to understand the risks that your surgeon has already discussed. It may also bring up other issues that will require a second surgical consultation to clarify. You should not feel that you are being an inconvenience by seeking another consultation and clarification of any questions that you may have.

You should take the opportunity to read this informed surgical consent website carefully and at your own pace. The questionnaire at the end will help to clarify your understanding. There is also opportunity to make note of specific concerns and issues that may be relevant to you. Discuss these concerns with your surgeon.

Impact of complications

The risks of surgery involve possible inconvenience if a complication occurs. It may result in an extension of your recovery period and in some cases may need further surgery. Infrequently, complications may have a permanent effect on your final result.

Financial risks

Financial risks are involved with any surgery. Private health insurance is strongly recommended. If you do not have private health insurance then a complication or further surgery will add to the overall cost of your surgery.

Risks related to general health

Your general health will impact on the possible risks of surgery. Many of the risks associated with surgery can be predicted. However, your general health plays a vital role to the outcome of your surgery. Age carries a greater risk with any surgery. Being overweight carries a greater surgical risk. Other medical conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart and lung disease may also increase your surgical risk. Smoking greatly increases all risks and complications



of surgery.

What else?

Finally other factors, that may not be obvious, can influence the outcome of your surgery and the risks are beyond anyone's control.

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Patient Photographs

The following are examples of facelift surgery in different scenarios.

Patient One

The areas of concern are the cheeks and jowls that have excessive, loose skin and wrinkles.



Before facelift surgery



3 months after a lower facelift. the areas of concern have been addressed. Some redness of the scars behind the ears is still evident.

Patient Two



Areas of concern before the operation are around the mouth and the jowls



Before the operation the jowls around the mouth are prominent



One month after a lower facelift the mouth and jowl area are rejuvenated



Improvement in the jawline is seen after surgery. Redness around a deep suture in front of the ear is visible. The other scars are fading

Patient Three

The skin is sun-damaged, wrinkled and loose. The areas of concern are the jowls and the neck.



Before facelift surgery



3 months after a lower facelift and necklift. The skin is tighter and less lined around the cheeks and the neck is more youthful.

Patient Four

The lower face and jowls are the areas of concern.



Before facelift surgery



One month after a lower facelift shows improvement in the lower face.

Specific Risks of Facelift

Bleeding and haematoma

Taking aspirin or anti inflammatory tablets and mega doses of certain vitamins (vitamin E) can influence blood clotting and cause excessive bleeding.

Despite taking precautions, it is still possible that you may have problems with bleeding during or after your surgery.

A collection of blood under the skin (haematoma) is the most common complication following facelift surgery. Accumulations of blood under the skin can cause prolonged bruising and swelling, delayed healing, lumpiness under the skin and long term scarring.

Small collections of blood (haematomas) under the skin are usually allowed to absorb spontaneously. Larger haematomas may require aspiration with a needle or surgical drainage to achieve the best result. Drainage of a haematoma is likely to require readmission to hospital and a general anaesthetic.

Inflammation and infection

Occasionally inflammation around sutures in the muscles and under the skin occurs and manifests as persistent redness and swelling under the skin. This settles with anti-inflammatory medications and time;(sometimes months).

Infection following facelift surgery can be a serious complication causing skin and tissue loss. Infection will significantly delay healing (weeks to months) and greatly increase scarring. The usual cause of infection is bacteria from the skin, ear canals, the mouth or the nose. Most infections present at 3 to 5 days after surgery as localised redness, swelling and pain.

A surface infection may require antibiotic ointment only. Deeper infections are usually treated with antibiotics.

Development of an abscess or collection of pus under the skin will require additional surgery under anaesthetic to drain the infection and debride (remove) any dead tissue.

Wound separation or delayed healing

Some areas of the face may not heal normally or may take a long time to heal.

Possible reasons for delayed healing include inflammation, infection, wound tension and decreased circulation due to smoking or excessive cold or external pressure to the face.



Smokers have a greater risk of skin loss and wound healing complications. You must cease smoking 4 weeks prior to and for 4 weeks after your facelift surgery.

Skin loss

Skin loss can occur after a facelift. The main causative factor of skin loss is reduced blood supply from smoking. Smokers have a greater chance of skin loss and poor healing because of decreased skin circulation. The area of skin behind the ear or directly in front of the ear is particularly at risk of this type of skin loss. Smoking should cease 4 weeks prior to surgery and for 4 weeks after.



If there has been skin loss after facelift surgery, healing may be prolonged and is achieved by regular wound dressings.

Other causative factors that may result in skin loss relate to increased tension and reduced blood supply from haematoma, infection or too tight bandages. Treatment involves removal of any recognised causative factor, antibiotics, regular dressings, and wound debridement to remove non-healed or dead tissue. A skin graft may be required. In cases of skin slough healing will be slow and scarring will be extensive. Further surgery after 6 to 12 months may be required to improve the scars.

Abnormal scars

Abnormal scars may occur anywhere along the facelift incision. Abnormal scars most commonly form in the region behind the ear where the tension on the skin is greatest or where a complication has occurred.

Abnormal scars in front of the ear may be difficult to conceal. There is the possibility of visible marks from skin sutures.

Abnormal scar formation also depends on skin type.

Raised, thick or hypertrophic scars may require repeated steroid injections into the scar until it settles. Wide scars may require scar revision surgery to improve their appearance.

A brown discolouration in a scar usually settles with time. White scars are permanent and there is no known satisfactory treatment.

Your own history of scarring should give you some indication of what you can expect.



The scar behind the ear may thicken and require further treatment.

Asymmetry

The human face is normally asymmetrical. Most faces have a long side and a short side. The signs of aging are usually more advanced on the short side of the face. Despite surgical allowance for correction, these features can persist after a facelift.

Damage to deeper structures

Deeper structures such as the parotid gland, muscles, fat and particularly nerves may be damaged during the course of facelift surgery. The potential for this to occur varies with the type of facelift procedure performed.

Parotid gland injury may result in formation of a fluid filled cyst in the cheek that will require draining.

Injury to deeper structures may be temporary or permanent and may require further treatment.

Nerve injury

Motor and sensory nerves may be injured during a facelift operation. Damage to motor nerves may cause a temporary (or rarely permanent) weakness or loss of movement to the facial muscles of expression resulting in an uneven facial appearance after facelift surgery. Temporary weakness of facial muscles occurs in about 1% of patients and usually improves over time.

Nerve injuries may rarely result in permanent loss of facial movements.

Damage to sensory nerves of the face, neck and ear region may cause temporary (or rarely permanent) numbness to areas of skin on the face, ear or neck. Scarring around a sensory nerve may lead to chronic pain. This is a rare complication after a facelift.

Skin disorders / skin cancer

A facelift is a surgical procedure used to tighten the skin and deeper structures of the face. Skin disorders and skin cancer may still occur independent of facelift surgery. Occasionally small skin vessels become prominent in the skin of the face after surgery. Many of these spider vessels may have been present before the surgery but were not as noticeable. Some spider vessels appear in the skin of the face and are related to the surgery. Treatment of these vessels may be desirable at a later stage after surgery.

Hair loss

Hair loss may occur around any scar that is within the hair. The occurrence of this is not predictable. The hair loss may be temporary or permanent. In most cases hair loss is temporary. If hair does not regrow around a scar then additional surgery to correct the problem may be required.

The unfavourable result

The unfavourable result after a facelift often occurs because of limitations of human tissues and skin to obtaining the preferred cosmetic goal rather than poorly executed surgery. The unfavourable result would include hairline shifts, distortion of the ear lobe, lines of misdirection on the face or inadequate tightness of parts of the face. The unfavourable result may also follow a complication of your surgery. You may require additional surgery to improve the results of facelift surgery.

The undesirable result

Disappointment with the results of your surgery may relate to less than expected improvement in both the contour of the face and neck or relatively little improvement in correction of skin creases. If the facelift has not met your expectations additional procedures, such as laser resurfacing, collagen or Botox may be required to treat fine wrinkles.

In the long term subsequent alterations in facial appearance may occur as the result of aging, weight loss or gain, illness, sun exposure, or other circumstances not related to facelift surgery. Facelift surgery does not arrest the aging process or produce permanent tightening of the face and neck. Future surgery or other treatments may be necessary to maintain the results of a facelift operation.

Risks Common to All Operations

Discomfort and pain

The severity and duration of post-operative pain varies with each individual. Mild to moderate discomfort or pain is normal after any surgery and can be expected after liposuction. Pain will be worse with movement if liposuction has been performed on the lower half of the body. If the pain becomes severe and is not relieved by pain medication you may have a complication. In this case you should contact your surgeon.



Nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting typically relate to the anaesthetic and usually settles quickly. In some cases persisting nausea and vomiting may relate to pain relieving medication or other medications like antibiotics. Infection may also cause nausea and vomiting. If nausea and vomiting persist you may develop dehydration. You should contact your surgeon if nausea and vomiting persist.

Swelling and bruising

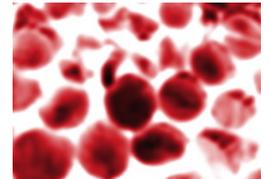
Moderate swelling and bruising are normal after any surgery and can be expected after liposuction. Severe swelling and bruising may indicate bleeding or possible infection. Discolouration from bruising may take several weeks to resolve.

Swelling and bruising are expected to settle faster by wearing a tight fitting girdle or garment and with application of arnica ointment to the abdominal skin for the first 4 to 6 weeks following the operation.

Intermittent swelling after liposuction may persist for up to 12 months after surgery.

Bleeding and haematoma

Bleeding is always possible after any operation. Some bleeding will result in bruising. Continued bleeding may result in continuous ooze from the suture lines or may result in a collection of blood under the skin. You should notify your surgeon if bleeding after surgery persists.



Small collections of blood under the skin usually absorb spontaneously. A large collection of blood (haematoma) is uncommon after liposuction and may produce pressure and complications to healing of the skin.

Most haematomas occur in the first 24 hours and may require aspiration or surgical drainage in an operating room and a general anaesthetic to drain the accumulated blood.

The presence of a haematoma, even if evacuated, may predispose to infection and antibiotics are often recommended. Infrequently haemorrhage or increased bruising can happen 7 to 10 days following liposuction. Possible factors for late bleeding include infection, extreme physical exertion, aspirin ingestion or an unrecognized bleeding disorder.

Aspirin, anti-inflammatory tablets and mega doses of certain vitamins (vitamin E) can influence blood clotting and cause excessive bleeding. It is recommended that you do not take any aspirin, similar drugs like cartia, astrix or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications for ten days before surgery, as this contributes to a greater risk of bleeding, bruising, swelling and infection. A single tablet is enough to increase the risk of bleeding.

If you take an anticoagulant like heparin or warfarin, you will need to discuss these medications with your surgeon prior to your liposuction.

Hypertension (high blood pressure) that is not under good medical control may also cause bleeding during or after surgery.

Seroma

Yellow fluid (seroma) may accumulate under the skin in areas that have had ultrasonic liposuction in the first month following surgery.

The accumulated fluid will cause swelling and pain in the affected areas.

While the body absorbs small seromas with rest, larger ones need needle drainage or additional surgery to drain the fluid from under the skin.

A seroma may contribute to infection.

Inflammation and infection

Infection may occur after any surgery.

Most infections occur within 3 to 5 days after surgery and may cause swelling, redness and tenderness in the skin where there has been liposuction and around the suture lines. A surface infection may only require antibiotic ointment.



Occasionally an offensive discharge may occur from the suture line. Deeper infections will require treatment with antibiotics.

Infection may cause wound breakdown or skin slough (loss). Both wound breakdown and skin slough will result in delays to healing and possible increase in scarring.

Additional surgery to deal with wound breakdown and skin slough will be required. Additional surgery may involve skin grafting. More scarring, and further surgery can be expected in the long term.

Some surgeons will prescribe prophylactic (preventative) antibiotics to be used around the time of liposuction.

Crusting along incision lines

Crusting along suture lines should be prevented with frequent and regular washing of your suture lines with antibacterial soap (sapoderm, gamophen) and application of antibiotic ointment or soft white paraffin if required.

Careful drying of the suture lines with a clean towel will be required to prevent moisture.



Numbness

Small sensory nerves to the skin surface are occasionally disturbed when liposuctions performed. Numbness or strange tingling sensations of the skin after liposuction usually resolves within 3 months as the nerve endings heal spontaneously. Return of sensation to normal may sometimes take up to 2 years and may be permanent.

Itching

Itching and occasional small shooting electrical sensations within the skin frequently occur as the nerve endings heal. Ice, skin moisturisers and massages are

frequently helpful. These symptoms are common during the recovery period and may persist for several weeks after surgery.

Necrosis

Necrosis is the formation of dead fatty tissue under the skin. Fat necrosis occurs more commonly after ultrasonic liposuction and may prevent wound healing and require surgical correction.

Unsatisfactory scarring may occur following necrosis.

Factors associated with increased necrosis include infection and smoking.

Wound separation or delayed healing

Any surgical wound, during the healing phase may separate or heal unusually slowly for a number of reasons. This can occur as a result of inflammation, infection, wound tension, excess external pressure and decreased circulation. Some people may experience slow healing due to unrelated medical problems. Smokers have a greater risk of skin loss and wound healing complications.

Wound separation may also occur after suture removal.

Wound separation will require frequent wound dressings and healing will be delayed. If delayed healing occurs, recovery time will be prolonged, (weeks to months), and the final outcome of surgery may be affected. More scarring can be expected.

Further surgery may be required to remove any non-healed tissue and to obtain wound closure. Skin grafting may also be required to achieve wound closure.

Poor scars will result following wound healing problems and additional surgery may be desired 6 to 12 months after the initial surgery to improve scarring.

Increased risk for smokers

Smokers have a greater chance of infection, skin slough (loss), underlying fat loss (necrosis), and poor wound healing, because of decreased skin circulation. Bleeding and haematoma formation are more common in smokers than non-smokers.

Smoking also predisposes to life threatening complications like deep vein thrombosis (DVT), pulmonary embolism, pneumonia or massive infection.

It is strongly recommended that you cease smoking 4 weeks prior to and 4 weeks after your surgery.



Sensitivity or allergy to dressings and tape

Skin or localised allergies may occur to topical antiseptic solutions, suture materials, soaps, ointments, tapes or dressings used during or after surgery. Such problems are unusual and are usually mild and easily treated. Please advise your surgeon of any skin irritation, itch, blisters or redness that may develop beneath your dressings. Allergic reactions resolve after removal of the causative agent and may require additional treatment.

Suture complications

Suture reaction or local infection may occur when subcutaneous sutures (sutures under the skin) are used. Exposed sutures will require removal for local healing to progress. Skin sutures may become buried under the skin during healing and subcutaneous sutures may not dissolve (stitch granuloma). Additional surgery may be necessary to remove buried sutures or granulomas. Suture marks in the skin can occur if skin sutures or staples are used to close your surgical incision.

Skin scarring

All surgical incisions produce scarring and although scars are inevitable, some are worse than others, and the quality of the final scars is unpredictable and not entirely under the control of the surgeon. Some areas on the body scar more than other areas, and some people scar more than others.

Scars may be worse if there is a tendency to keloid scarring, in the younger person or if there has been a delay in healing due to infection or wound breakdown.

Your own history of scarring should give you some indication of what you can expect. Please ask your surgeon about scar management.

Red and discoloured scars

The appearance of your surgical scar will change during the various stages of wound healing. Some scars become more red and somewhat raised and excessive between six weeks and three months.

After six months scars begin to fade in their colour intensity. Scars on the legs and thighs may take up to 2 years to get as good as they will get. Scars are permanent. Scars will remain permanently visible to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the outcome.

A brown discolouration in a scar usually settles with time. White scars are permanent and there is no known satisfactory treatment. Please ask your surgeon about scar management.



Abnormal scars

Abnormal scars may occur even though careful surgical techniques are used and uncomplicated wound healing occurs after surgery. Scars may be unattractive because they are raised, thick (hypertrophic or keloid), stretched (wide), depressed, or of a different colour to the surrounding skin. An abnormal scar may have visible suture marks. Abnormal scars may occur both within the skin and the deeper tissues.

Abnormal scars occur more commonly in some skin types, in the younger patient or if there has been a delay in healing due to infection or wound breakdown. Most scars improve with time but some may require additional treatment.

Thick scars may respond to taping, placement of silicone sheeting onto the scars, serial injection of steroid into the scars or surgical scar revision. Wide scars may require scar revision surgery to improve their appearance. Surgical scar revision may be disappointing especially in the younger patient.

Please ask your surgeon about scar management.

Asymmetry

The human body is normally asymmetrical. Despite surgical allowance for correction, the normal variation from one side of the body to the other will be reflected in the results obtained from your liposuction. Perfect symmetry may not be attainable after liposuction.

Injury to deeper structures

Blood vessels, nerves and muscles may be injured during liposuction. The incidence of such injuries is rare.

Post-operative fatigue and depression

It is normal for people to occasionally experience feelings of depression for a few days after surgery, especially when the early postoperative suture line, swelling and bruising is seen.

The post-operative emotional low improves with time. Physical recovery from any operation and anaesthetic is gradual.

The undesirable result

The undesirable result occurs because of limitations of the human tissues and skin. On the other hand you may be disappointed with the results of surgery if they have not met your expectations. Your expectations may leave you dissatisfied with the results of your liposuction, despite having an adequate surgical result. Additional surgery may or may not improve the results of surgery.

The unfavourable result

The unfavourable result may relate to under correction, asymmetry, recurrence of the original problem or scar related problems. Additional surgery may be required to improve your results.

Need for revisional surgery

Every surgery has associated risks and complications that you need to be aware of. Should a complication occur, additional surgery or other treatment might become necessary. Revisional procedures are less predictable and involve more risks. You must consider any revisional surgery carefully after discussion with your surgeon.

The practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science. Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained.

If revisional surgery is required, you may incur further surgical, anaesthetic, pathology and hospital fees. These fees may be covered if you have private health insurance, depending on your level of cover. These fees will be your responsibility; so careful financial planning is required before you embark on any form of surgery.

Private Health Insurance is strongly advised for any surgery. Please speak to your surgeon regarding the costs of treating complications.

Chronic pain

Following surgery, abnormal scarring in the skin and deeper tissues may trap nerves and produce pain. Uncommonly, persistent or chronic pain that is of an unknown or ambiguous cause may develop. This type of chronic pain may be difficult or impossible to correct.

Long-term effects

There are many variable conditions that may influence the long-term result of your liposuction. Subsequent alterations to your body contour may occur as the result of aging, sun exposure, weight gains or weight loss, pregnancy, illness or other circumstances not related to your liposuction.

Additional liposuction, surgery or other treatments in some cases may be required to maintain or improve the results of your operation.

Deep Vein Thrombosis

A deep vein thrombosis is a blood clot occurring in the deep veins of the legs/calves. It causes pain and swelling in the affected leg and is potentially life threatening.

Treatment for deep vein thrombosis is essential and involves blood-thinning agents. Complications of a deep venous thrombosis include clots spreading from the legs to the lungs or heart and may cause shortness of breath, chest pain or death. If you are undergoing surgery, the risk of deep vein thrombosis relates to the type of surgery and the duration of the procedure.

Some people are more prone to developing deep venous thrombosis than others. These people may be of advanced age or people who have had a deep vein thrombosis in the past. Varicose veins are a risk factor as are certain medications like hormone replacement therapy and the oral contraceptive pill.

Smoking increases the risk of forming a deep vein thrombosis as well. Preventive treatment for deep vein thrombosis may be recommended and may consist of compression stockings, early ambulation or blood thinning agents. Your risk of DVT will be automatically calculated by this web site, and shall be presented to you later.

Anaesthetic related risks

Anaesthetic complications, although uncommon, do occur and should be discussed thoroughly with your anaesthetist prior to your surgery. Allergic reactions to drugs used in anaesthesia are rare (1 in 10,000).

Systemic reactions may also occur to drugs used during surgery and prescription medicines. Allergic reactions may require additional treatment.

It is possible to get a sore throat from the tube that is used to administer anaesthesia. You may develop a painful or infected intravenous site.

Other anaesthetic complications should be discussed with the anaesthetist.

Life threatening complications



Life threatening (or fatal, in some circumstances) complications like pulmonary embolism, cardiac arrhythmia, heart attack, stroke or massive infection are rare. These complications will require additional treatment.

Pulmonary (lung) complications

Pulmonary complications are uncommon and may occur secondary to either a blood clot starting in the legs (pulmonary embolism), aspiration of stomach secretions or partial collapse of the lungs after general anaesthesia

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Before Your Operation

Organise yourself for after your surgery

- Organise how you will get to and from hospital.
- Arrange to have someone at home with you for at least 2 or 3 days after you leave hospital.
- Organise help with your shopping, laundry, housework, pets, lawns, etc.
- Get all your pre-operative tests.
- Arrange leave from work and any financial chores as required.

Your health

Surgery and anaesthesia impose stress on your body.

The state of your health will be determined how well your body will cope with this stress.

It is important that you maximise your general health by exercising, not smoking and having regular checks with your GP, so that conditions such as hypertension, diabetes etc can be controlled.

Smoking

Smoking increases the risk of post-operative complications after surgery. It is recommended that you stop smoking for 4 weeks prior to your surgery and for 4 weeks after.

If you need help to give up smoking, speak to your G.P. who can prescribe medication to help you, speak your chemist who can advise you about nicotine replacement therapies or call the national QUIT LINE on 13 18 48.

Hospital

Depending on your pain tolerance and your home situation, it may be in your best interest to stay overnight in hospital. When in hospital you may have drains, a drip for fluid and pain relief. Drain tubes and dressings are likely to be removed before you are discharged from hospital.

Fasting, fluids, food

Fasting for surgery means that you cannot eat any food, or drink any fluid, after midnight the night before your surgery. A stomach full of fluid or food will mean that your anaesthetic may be dangerous and your procedure may be delayed or cancelled.

You should have nothing solid to eat, and drink no milk-containing fluids for 6 hours prior to an operation. You may have up to 1 glass of water per hour up to 3 hours prior to surgery.

If you are in hospital a sign over your bed will read "fasting", "nil by mouth" or "NBM".

If you take medications in the morning, these should be taken as normal on the morning of your operation with a sip of water at 6 am.

NB. Diabetic tablets and insulin should be withheld while you are fasting. When you brush your teeth in the morning, spit out any water rather than swallowing it.

Medications

You will be required to list all your medications by writing down the name, the dose and the day each medication is taken. If this is too difficult for you, ask your regular doctor to make a list of your current medications for you. It is important that you also bring all your medications to hospital with you.

Continue to take all your routine medications up to the time of admission to hospital EXCEPT blood thinning tablets like warfarin/coumadin. These medications must be stopped 5 days before surgery. You should discuss these medications with your surgeon.

Tablets like aspirin, astring, plavix, iscover, cardiprin, and tablets for arthritis, rheumatism and gout, like brufen, Clinoril, feldene, indocid, orudis and voltaren must be stopped 10 days before surgery.

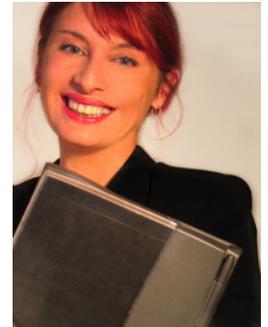
If you are not sure about your medications and the effect that they may have on your surgery please seek advice from your surgeon in advance of your surgery.

Other medications

Antibiotics and small doses of blood thinning agents may be prescribed prior to your surgery.

Diabetes mellitus

If you have diabetes you must tell your surgeon prior to your admission date. You must also tell the staff at the time of your



admission. Special arrangement will be made for you as necessary.

Your blood sugar levels will be monitored from the time you start fasting until normal eating resumes. Do not take any diabetic tablets on the morning of your surgery.



Skin preparation

You may shower at home with an anti-bacterial soap such as sapoderm or gamophen and wash your hair prior to your surgery. The same soap can be used after your surgery as well.

You may be required to have a shower in hospital with an antiseptic solution before your surgery.

A responsible person

A responsible person may be required to accompany you home after surgery. A responsible person is an adult who understands the postoperative instructions given to them and is physically and mentally able to make decisions for your welfare when appropriate.



Travel

You will need to arrange for a responsible adult to drive you after your surgery. A suitable vehicle is a car or similar. A taxi is only acceptable if someone OTHER than the taxi driver accompanies you. Public transport such as a bus is NOT acceptable.

General exercise

It is important that you maintain your fitness and you should continue your normal activities prior to your surgery. If time permits you may try to increase your fitness level gradually. Your fitness will be of benefit to your overall recovery after surgery. Walking is an excellent way of improving fitness and is recommended.

Pain relief in hospital

It is expected that you will have pain and discomfort after your surgery. The amount and severity of pain will vary from person to person.

Narcotics (morphine, pethidine, fentanyl) are used to relieve pain. Narcotics are not addictive in the amounts required to relieve pain.



You may be given a PCA (Patient controlled analgesia). A PCA allows you to regulate the amount of medication that you need to control your discomfort. This is achieved by pushing a button to administer a pre-prescribed dose of narcotic through your intravenous drip.

It is important to limit the amount of discomfort that you have, so that you are able to do your breathing and general exercises as directed.

Any initial severe pain and discomfort will be managed with intravenous medication such as morphine, pethidine or fentanyl. Removal of tubes and drains usually results in a significant reduction of pain. The PCA machine is usually replaced with pain relieving tablets before discharge from hospital.

Pain relief at home

Pain, aches and discomfort may still be present when you leave hospital and may continue for several weeks. It is important when you are at home to maintain control over your pain, aches and discomforts.

Drugs for pain relief vary in strength and can "generally" be related to pain severity, BUT remember also that individuals have differing responses to pain and pain relieving medications.

As a guide and for your knowledge, the range of medication by drug strength from weakest to strongest is as follows:

Mild pain relief will be required for mild pain. Such pain relieving medication includes panadol, paracetamol, panamax and panadeine.

Moderate pain relief may require medications such as digesic, panadeine forte, tramyl, endone or oxycodone. You need to be aware that some pain relieving medications may contribute to persisting nausea and vomiting and will contribute to constipation in the post-operative period.

Antiinflammatory drugs such as vioxx, celebrex, brufen, naprosyn and indocid will contribute to effective pain relief when taken with mild pain relieving tablets.

If you have persistent unrelieved pain you may need to be seen by a doctor to exclude another cause for the pain.



Constipation

If you normally take medication for bowel problems you will need to bring these medications to hospital with you. It is common to develop constipation after surgery that may require treatment.

Prevention of constipation begins on the day of surgery and continues until the bowel returns to "normal" function, which is usually once the need for pain medication ceases.

Medications for constipation such as coloxyl and senna or lactulose can be purchased from the local chemist without a prescription. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables, take extra fibre and increase your exercise. Drink plenty of water, providing you are not on restricted fluids for any reason.

Other

It is important that you try to retain your identity as a normal person whilst you are in hospital. Make sure that you ask plenty of questions about what is happening to you. Feel free to share your concerns with the nurses, doctors and other professionals that are involved in your care.

On waking

You will have dressings and a firm bandage around the cheeks and head. The bandage may make you feel claustrophobic. Small drain tubes will come out at each side of the scalp. You will wake in a head up position with pillows behind your head. You may have some blurring of vision from ointment that has been placed in your eyes to keep them moist during surgery. Occasionally cold packs will be used around the cheeks.



Discomfort

You can expect to have some discomfort when you wake up after a facelift. You will be placed in a head up position to help reduce swelling and pain.

You may feel agitation rather than pain. If agitation increases or if pain becomes worse on one side compared to the other side you should notify your surgeon. You need to remember to move your legs to keep the circulation flowing and to take deep breaths to expand the lungs.

Dressings and drains

Dressings and drains following facelift surgery may be removed as early as 24 to 48 hours after your surgery.

If there is a lot of drainage, then the drains will remain for longer. Some surgeons do not use drains.

Please ask your surgeon how long the dressings need to stay on. When your dressing and drains have been removed you may be able to shower and wash your hair. Check with your surgeon if you are able to shower.



Ice packs

At home a mouldable cold pack or a small bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel may help to reduce swelling, bruising, and pain.

Cold packs can be applied to the cheeks and neck (for 20 minutes every 1 to 2 hours) in the first 48 hours after surgery to help minimise swelling and bruising. The cold packs should not hurt.

If cold packs are uncomfortable, don't use them as often. After a few days gentle daily massage with a bland moisturising cream after your shower will help to resolve bruising and any lumpiness.



Coughing

Coughing, sneezing, or straining and vomiting will increase your blood pressure and increase the risk of bleeding and haematoma (collection of blood under the skin). Coughing or straining in the first few days after your surgery should be avoided, if possible.

T.E.D. stockings

You will be fitted with TED stockings before your facelift surgery and you will wake from surgery with the stockings on.

TED stockings help to prevent blood clots from forming in the legs. TED stockings should be worn whilst you are immobile.

Pain relief

You will need to take painkillers as provided. It is recommended that you avoid aspirin or aspirin based products, as they will promote bruising and bleeding.

The usual medications given in the postoperative period consist of panadol, panadeine, panadeine forte, panamax, digesic, and endone. These medications may be combined with anti-inflammatory medications such as vioxx, celebex, or brufen. Make sure that you have a postoperative pain regime at the time of discharge and that you understand the medications that you are taking and what they are designed to do for you.



Sleeping tablets

One or two sleeping tablets (normison, temazepam, ativan) may be taken at night, if necessary, to help with sleeping in the first few days after surgery.

Other medications

Your surgeon may prescribe a course of prophylactic (preventative) antibiotics.

Nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting may be due to the anaesthetic or post-operative medication (like pain killers or antibiotics).

Apart from being unpleasant, vomiting will cause increased blood pressure and agitation; in turn increasing the risk of bleeding and haematoma.

Medication to prevent nausea and vomiting may be required.

If prolonged, nausea and vomiting may be related to a complication like infection and may cause dehydration. You need to inform your surgeon of prolonged nausea and vomiting.

Bruising

Bruising of the face and neck is usually maximal at approximately 48 hours after surgery. Most bruises will resolve by 2 weeks. Gentle massage with a moisturising lotion (sorbolene), or arnica cream may help to dissipate bruising.

Bleeding or ooze

There may be ooze of blood from any of the suture lines or from the drain tube holes. Any ooze should resolve within 24 to 48 hours. Persistent or offensive ooze should be reported to your surgeon.

Swelling

Swelling can occur for 4 to 6 weeks facelift surgery and sometimes, intermittent swelling may take up to 12 months to settle. Please ask your surgeon how long swelling should take to resolve. Swelling lasting longer than this time may be due to a complication, and should be reported to your surgeon.

Sutures

Sutures or staples will be present in the skin and within the scalp. These sutures or staples will require removal at some stage after your surgery. The normal time frame is anywhere between 5 days to 14 days depending on the surgery and the location on face or scalp. Suture removal is usually arranged with the surgeon.

Some sutures may be beneath the skin and will absorb with time. The aim of absorbable sutures beneath the skin is to provide wound support so that scar stretch can be minimised.

Occasionally the body will want to extrude deep sutures. A sore or a pimple on the suture line may indicate an underlying suture trying to break through the skin. This suture can be removed as soon as it breaks through the skin. Antibiotic ointment or betadine may be required until the area heals. Infrequently a lump forms related to a suture that has not dissolved (a stitch granuloma). This stitch granuloma may need to be excised as a local anaesthetic procedure.

Cleaning

Having a shower and getting your sutures wet may be permitted by your surgeon after the dressings (and drains) have been removed. An antibacterial soap (sapoderm, gamophen) may be recommended.

You will need to pay attention to washing the suture line around the ear and in the hair. Suture lines should be carefully dried with a clean towel. Please check with your surgeon and ensure you follow your surgeon's instructions about wound care.

Occasionally the suture line may become red and ooze. If this occurs antibiotic ointment or betadine may be required. Your surgeon may prescribe antibiotics as well.



Travel

A facelift is performed under general anaesthesia and can be performed as day surgery.

If you are going home after day surgery a family member or friend must drive you because you have had an anaesthetic and someone should stay overnight with you for the same reason. You may need help from a relative or friend at home during the first few days after your facelift.

If you have any questions about these matters, please speak to your surgeon.

Anaesthetic effects

The effects of an anaesthetic may still be present 24 hours after your procedure, even if you do not feel them. Your reflexes will be slower and you are at risk of injury. It is illegal to drive while under the influence of a drug (even a prescribed one) and you could be charged. Do not make important decisions or sign legal documents for 24 hours after an anaesthetic. Take care with alcohol intake after surgery because medications and alcohol may interact with the residual anaesthetic. Discuss your normal medications with the anaesthetist.

Readmission to hospital

Rarely you may need to be re-admitted unexpectedly to hospital. The common causes for re-admission are persistent nausea and vomiting, anxiety, the need for unexpected additional pain relief or for treatment of unexpected complications of surgery such as bleeding, wound problems or infection.

Activity

Too much activity too soon will risk delays in healing or increase the risk of complications. Sleeping arrangements with the head elevated and with pillows beneath the head should continue for two weeks after surgery. Try to avoid any straining or rushing around.

You may go to the bathroom, walk around the house sit and watch TV, etc., but no matter how good you feel do not clean the house, engage in heavy manual work, go to the gym etc. for 4 weeks following your surgery. This also applies to sexual activity.

Sport

Slow walking on the flat for exercise is often therapeutic in the early post-operative period. Your body will dictate whether you are able to safely recommence your exercise program. More strenuous exercise like fast walking, running or swimming may commence after 4 to 6 weeks.

More strenuous exercise like tennis or contact sports can commence after 6 to 8 weeks. As a general rule: if it hurts, don't do it. Please ask your surgeon when you can start exercising.

Localised sore areas are not uncommon and usually with time.

Sun exposure

If fresh scars are exposed to the sun, they will tend to become darker and take longer to fade. Sunscreen on sun-exposed scars can help to fade scars.

Diet

Your post-operative diet should consist of fluids initially then soft food that is easy to prepare. If you have any postoperative nausea, carbonated sodas and dry crackers may settle the stomach. Small frequent meals will be more suitable and comfortable.

Vitamins

Although not proven, there is some suggestion that multivitamins prior to and after surgery may aid in wound healing. Avoid mega dosing on vitamins prior to surgery.

Smoking



Smoking reduces capillary blood flow to the skin and may result in delays to wound healing or complications of your facelift. Smoking not only affects wound healing; it also increases the risk of bleeding, wound infections, post-operative chest infections.

Any coughing may disrupt the muscle repair. Smoking also increases the risk of developing a blood clot in the legs that can travel to the lungs. It is recommended that you cease smoking at least 4 weeks prior to your surgery and for 4 weeks after.

Alcohol

Medications and alcohol may interact with the residual anaesthetic and prescription pain medicine.

Alcohol also dilates blood vessels and may increase the risk of postoperative bleeding.

It is recommended that you avoid alcohol for the first three days after surgery and restrict your alcohol intake for the first month.



Driving

It is recommended that you do not drive for a certain period of time after a facelift.

To be able to drive safely you must have full use of your reflexes to drive, and any post-operative discomfort will inhibit your reflexes.

If pain will inhibit them, don't drive.

You may resume driving when you feel you are able, but it is advisable to discuss this with your surgeon or check with the road traffic authority first.



Recovery time

You must allow yourself adequate recovery time. You will have facial swelling and bruising for at least 2 weeks. Too much activity too soon will increase the risk of complications such as bleeding or haematoma, infection and delayed healing. It would be wise to ensure you have adequate time off work. You must also allow sufficient time for your body to recover from the effects of anaesthesia and surgery. Discuss the expected time for recovery with your surgeon prior to your surgery and allow plenty of time for adequate recovery.

Healing

Everyone heals at a different rate. The ability to heal is variable and depends upon a number of factors such as your genetic background, your weight, your overall state of health and lifestyle (exercise, diet, smoking, drinking, etc.). Your attention to preparing yourself for surgery will be manifest in your post-operative recovery. Many people believe the surgeon "heals" the patient. Not one person can make another heal. Your cooperation and close attention to pre and post-operative instructions is extremely important and is in your best interest.

Following instructions

A major factor in the course of healing is whether you follow the instructions given by your surgeon and the nurses in the surgery.

Such guidelines are designed to promote the healing process and to prevent the occurrence of anything that may interfere with your recovery.

It is imperative that you recognise that you are a partner in this process and have a responsibility to follow instructions carefully.

The instructions, based on broad experience, are designed to give you the best opportunity for healing without delay or surprise.



Depression

Depression is a normal reaction to surgery. The third day following your surgery may be the worst.

You may be teary. It is not uncommon to experience a brief period of "let-down" or depression after any surgery.

You may subconsciously have expected to look and feel better "instantly," even though you rationally understood that this would not be the case.

As healing occurs, these thoughts usually disappear quickly.

If you feel depressed, understanding that this is a "natural" phase of the healing process may help you to cope with this emotional state.



Support from family and friends

Support from family and friends can be very helpful, but because they may not understand what constitutes a normal postoperative course, their comments may unintentionally create emotional turmoil for you.

The staff at the surgery and your surgeon will tell you honestly how you are doing and what to expect.

Please trust in your surgeon's knowledge and experience when your progress is discussed with you.



Complications

Complications are infrequent. When complications occur, it is seldom a consequence of poor surgery or poor postoperative care. Complications are more likely to be a result of the variable healing capacity or a failure to follow post-operative instructions. You will be assisted in every way possible if a complication occurs.

Should the unexpected occur, please understand that it is important to follow the advice of your surgeon and nursing staff in order to treat it as effectively as possible. Your surgeon and the nursing staff will ensure that you have support and assistance during this difficult time.

Appointments

It is very important that you follow the schedule of appointments established for you after surgery. Appointments to see the nurse or the surgeon should be made before or immediately after discharge from hospital. The review appointment may be the next day or up to one week following surgery.

If no appointment has been made, you must ensure that you contact your surgeon and make a follow up appointment. If you have any concerns don't feel that you are bothering the surgeon or the staff.

If need be, you can be seen prior to any arranged review appointment to sort out any concerns.



Revisional surgery

Occasionally the result of your surgery may not be totally perfect. If you feel that you can focus on the overall degree of improvement instead of any small lack of perfection, then you will reap the benefits of the results of your operation. If small imperfections will prevent you focusing on the degree of improvement after your surgery you probably should not have had an operation.

Your surgeon will use their expertise and experience in their surgical techniques to achieve the best results and ensure their patients receive the most advanced surgical techniques available. They keep updated by attending, national and international aesthetic conferences and seminars regularly.

The surgery performed may not necessarily relate to the methods that are sometimes promoted, or advertised in popular magazines, newspaper articles or on television.

The rate of revisional surgery, even in the most skilled surgical hands, can never be zero because patient and surgeon can control only some aspects of the outcome.

Minor adjustments or additional revisions following cosmetic surgery may be necessary in up to 5% of patients.

Revisional surgery is performed after the first postoperative year (12 months after surgery) because resolution of swelling and stabilisation of the final appearance takes at least that long.

During the first year after surgery irregularities, asymmetries or poor contours may sufficiently improve without surgery, so very small imperfections following surgery should not be revised.

Revisional procedures are less predictable and involve more risks. You must consider any revisional surgery carefully after discussion with your surgeon.

If revisional surgery is required you may incur further surgical, anaesthetic, pathology and hospital fees. These fees may be covered if you have private health insurance, depending on your level of cover. These fees will be your responsibility and you will need careful financial planning you before you embark on any form of cosmetic surgery. Private Health Insurance is strongly advised for any cosmetic surgery



Learn how to [choose your plastic surgeon](#), meet our [support team](#), and find out more about the [procedures performed by Dr Hertess](#).

Our Qualifications

