



Facelift

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COSMETIC SURGERY

General information

A facelift or rhytidectomy is performed to rejuvenate the face. Its effect is on the lower part of the face – i.e. below the eyes. More specifically it tightens the skin of the face and lifts the cheeks (jowls). A neck-lift (platysmaplasty) is often performed at the same time to improve the contour of the neck and jaw-line. It is possible to combine a facelift with other facial surgery, such as blepharoplasty (eye-lids), rhinoplasty (nose), lip augmentation or brow (forehead) –lift.

The operation involves the removal of excess skin of the face and repositioning of the cheek fat, which has sagged down with age. This leaves a scar running in front of the ear from the hairline to the ear-lobe, and to a variable extent behind the ear, back up into the hairline. There may be a short scar under your chin if you have also had a neck-lift.

There are variations of the facelift and these may or may not be appropriate for you. They include short-scar facelift, mid-face lift and minimal access suture techniques.

Preparation for surgery

Smoking can cause problems with wound healing and increase your risk of a chest infection following general anaesthetic. You must not smoke for at least four weeks before your operation and for four weeks after it.

Please, only take medication prescribed by your doctor for the two weeks before and two weeks after your operation. In particular, herbal, homeopathic and nutritional supplements (including vitamin E capsules) may contain substances that increase your risk of bleeding and cause sun sensitivity.

Aspirin, and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) increase your risk of bleeding.

You should avoid all such medicines for two weeks before and two weeks after your operation. If you are concerned, please check with your GP that it is safe to do so. In certain specific circumstances, you may be prescribed a NSAID for your post-operative pain, which you should take as directed.

If you drink alcohol, it is best to drink only a small amount for the week before the operation and for the first two weeks of your recovery. You should avoid it altogether if you are taking antibiotics or strong pain medication.

Your recovery after the operation will be easier if you are fit and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Regular exercise will help you cope with the operation better.

If you feel unwell leading up to your operation please inform our secretary, as it may be best to reschedule your operation for when you are well.

Do not have surgery if you may be pregnant.

The operation

Please come for your operation in loose-fitting clothing that can be easily and comfortably removed. Slip-on shoes are best, as bending over must be avoided after your surgery. Avoid nail varnish and heavy make-up. Rings, ear-rings and body-piercings should be removed at home. Bring your normal medication with you and a sufficient supply for the duration of your anticipated stay in hospital. Someone should accompany you to the hospital and home when you leave hospital.

The operation is performed under general anaesthesia (asleep). You should expect to be in hospital for one to two nights. You will usually have one drain on each side. Getting up and about after the operation is important although it will be uncomfortable to start with. You should try to do this as soon as possible.

Care after your surgery

You will have a firm bandage around your head and cheeks. This will be removed on the day following your surgery. You may have some stitches that will need to be removed after a few days. Avoid rubbing or disturbing the area while they are in place. You may start to shower your face after removal of your drains, unless specifically advised not to, but do not soak it in water. Dry it gently by dabbing with a soft towel. Avoid heavy make-up to the face while you are recovering. There may be a light dressing for a few days after your drains have been removed. This can be stopped once there is no longer any staining on the dressing.

After two weeks, provided that your scars are healed and dry, start to moisturise and massage them. Use any plain skin moisturiser (which can contain vitamin E if you wish) and rub the cream in with a gentle massaging motion for 5-10 minutes, three times a day.

All scars should be protected from the sun for the first year after surgery. Ideally they should be covered with clothing. If this is not practical, then total sun block should be used and the area shaded from the sun. Sun exposure of a fresh scar can cause permanent discolouration, resulting in a darkened, visible scar.

You should avoid becoming constipated after your surgery. If you are prone to this then you must take a stool softener during your recovery.

What to expect after your surgery

You will have a scar running around your ear. These are usually red and slightly raised during the early period of healing. It takes a few months for the scars to settle fully and massage can aid this process, once it is comfortable enough to do so. Your face will feel numb but this will gradually

recover over a few months. During this time you must avoid contact with hot things, such as a hot water bottle, as there is a risk of being burned. Your face will be bruised and swollen, it will feel tight at first and you will experience some pain and discomfort. This will settle in the first few weeks after surgery. You must sleep with your head and shoulders well propped-up by pillows in bed for the first two weeks. Please take your pain medication as directed until you are able to move about comfortably.

A follow-up appointment will be arranged for you when you leave hospital.

Driving and activity

After your surgery, you must not bend over or lift heavy objects for the first two weeks. All heavy and strenuous activity should be avoided for the first few weeks after your surgery. Graduated activity and exercise can then be started with full, unrestricted activity after twelve weeks, as your comfort allows. You will be able to start driving again when you feel comfortable and are safe doing so. This is usually between two and four weeks. Some car insurance companies have guidelines for driving after surgery and it is always best to check with your own company whether there are any restrictions imposed on you.

Complications

Although complications are uncommon, problems may occur as a result of your surgery. These can result in prolonged recovery but may also have an adverse effect on your final result. These include poor scarring (including keloid), bleeding, infection, delayed healing, wound breakdown, fluid collection, persistent numbness or pain, and asymmetry or unevenness. The muscles of your face may be weakened by the surgery. This is

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usually temporary but may rarely be permanent. It could leave your face asymmetric with poor movement on the affected side. Further surgery may be necessary to correct some of these, should they occur. A charge may have to be made for any additional treatment. There is also a small risk of developing a venous thrombosis (DVT), although measures are taken to minimise this risk.

Additional comments

If you have any questions about the information contained in this leaflet or you do not understand something that is included in it, please contact our secretary for clarification.

If you are concerned about your recovery, have bleeding, feel unwell or have increasing pain then please contact Clare Park Hospital where your surgery was performed, our secretary (during office hours), your local A+E Department, or your GP.

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