



BEFORE



AFTER

Debra Davies 55, from Ipswich, is single and until recently ran a catering company. She had a £12,000 facelift and an upper- and lower-eyelid lift with Prof Laurence Kirwan in London

Before I'm very happy and very single. I get a fair amount of attention from men because I'm confident in my own skin. Four friends have had procedures with Laurence and look great – not different, just fresher. You have to totally trust the person working on your face and I always wanted mine done by Laurence. I don't want it to look obvious or scary, just as if I've had a good night's sleep. I still want to look like me.

I've never had any Botox or fillers. I'd hate anyone to think

I'm super-vain – I'm not; I'm very ordinary. People tell me, 'You look great as you are,' but I could look nicer. If you looked at me full on, you'd think, 'You're crazy for having a facelift,' but my profile is a different story. Sometimes you catch a glimpse of yourself in a shop window and it shocks you.

I shall be petrified on the day of surgery by the sheer fact I'm in someone's hands having an unwarranted procedure. My reality check is that once this is over I'll walk

away and leave it alone. In 10 years when I'm 65 I'll have come to terms with the ageing process and I'll be more worried about tending my begonias. But 55 is the new 45.

After The morning of the operation I decided I wasn't going to have the chin implant I'd initially planned to have as well – I thought it might change the character of my face. I only had to stay in hospital overnight, and was out the next morning bandaged all around my head but absolutely tickety-boo. Three days after surgery I went back to London to have the stitches taken out of my eyes, and as the big bandage came off I was smiling; I could see it was going to be good.

I've dyed my hair and bobbed it and as a result I feel I look like a different person.

When you're single you don't know what's around the corner. I've sold my business and this is a new chapter for me. But my personality hasn't changed, and nor has the amount of attention I get from men. Like any woman my age I have up and down days, but I'm happy where I'm at. You have to work on the whole package, not just your face.

Hardly anyone has noticed any change in my face, and that's how I wanted it. People, especially guys, have said, 'You look great, but you were fine before,' and I agree. I was *bien dans ma peau* before the operation, but now I'm happy with a capital H.

DEBRA AND DIANE BOTH HAD FACELIFTS LAST YEAR.

They are not celebrities, nor do they consider themselves vain – but they are among an increasing number of ordinary women choosing to go under the knife. So what prompted them to do so? And what do they make of the results? **Olivia Gordon** hears four stories Photographs by Dan Burn-Fortl



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Diane Gardiner 63, from Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, had a £5,500 facelift with Nicholas James at Spire Harpenden Hospital. Diane, who is married to George, 66, a cameraman, is retired after working in fashion retail, and has two daughters from a previous marriage, Nikki, 43, and Nancy, 39

Before For 10 years I've thought about a facelift. I work out three times a week, I swim and I walk – I like to keep myself looking fairly decent. But then I looked in the mirror one day and thought, 'Oh my God, I look like my mother.'

This is an exciting time in my life. I feel a lot freer and more able to express myself now I'm older. I paint, make jewellery, look after my grandsons, go to the gym, go motor-racing with George, and read. I don't feel 63.

I don't want to try to look younger or to be pulled and stretched. I just want to look and feel as good as I can. It does cross my mind to let myself go occasionally, and I have let my hair colour grow out and now love the grey – it's quite liberating – but I want to get rid of my turkey neck, otherwise I'll be spending the rest of my life in polo necks. From my nose to my chin I have deep lines – I look like a ventriloquist's dummy. I've got very good skin, but

I'm sagging, and without make-up on I look awful. I don't know how I'll feel afterwards. I'm just so excited to think of the bandages coming off and thinking, 'Oh God, yes!' The fear is I'll look exactly the same.

After I wasn't apprehensive until the day itself, when all of a sudden it hit me what I was doing. When I came round I felt as if I was being strangled from the heavy bandages pressing on my windpipe. The next day you could see a difference already – my jowls had gone. George came to pick me up and said, 'Wow!' The anaesthetic made me tired and down for a few days. I had to wear a wimple-like scarf day and night, which was uncomfortable. A month on

I'm still quite stiff and swollen under the chin where they did liposuction.

My younger daughter, Nancy, is developing the same facial lines I had and is now looking at herself in the mirror and thinking, 'Oh God, I'm going the same way.' That makes me feel sad for her, but when she's older I think she'll do something about it.

It's not until you start doing your hair and make-up again that you see the amazing transformation. An acquaintance I met in Marks & Spencer today said, 'My God, where have you been?' Looking in the mirror is quite incredible. I don't see the old person looking back at me, that horrible neck of mine. I see this person who doesn't look old anymore.



It is a subtle change that has given me a lift in confidence without compromising the essence of how I look

Sue Wickwar 49, a driving instructor and part-time singer, is single and had a £3,200 advanced mini facelift and browlift with Philip Guest at Me Cosmetic Medicine in Bristol

Before I'm not a girly girl. I'm tomboyish. That's why my friends find this a bit strange. I've never plucked my eyebrows in my life and the last time I wore make-up was weeks ago at a wedding. But in my thirties I gave myself a deadline - I told my friends, 'Before I'm 50, I'm going to have cosmetic surgery.' I don't think anyone believed I was actually going to do it.

I've been singing in front of an audience every week for a long time, so I have confidence, but I want to look my best onstage and prolong my career as long as possible. It's not about being happy, because I am happy. I'm not

somebody who's needed another partner once one has gone. It's not about wanting to be more attractive. And I don't worry about ageing. It's not even about changing my face. I don't want people to say, 'Oh my God, you look 15 years younger.' I just want them to say, 'You look well.'

I don't see surgery as that extreme. I had Botox two years ago, and for six months people made positive comments. But I felt that was an industry of people trying to make money; there was little aftercare. And I don't like temporary solutions. Twenty years ago people were reluctant to admit to

a facelift. But now I have 18-year-old pupils in my car telling me their boyfriend has just forked out £4,500 for a boob job for them. Plastic surgery is a way of life today.

After The worst part was the build-up, not knowing what to expect. The procedure itself was so easy it was astonishing. I was sedated, and although I couldn't feel a thing I was still semi-conscious. Halfway through the operation I even opened my eyes and asked, 'How's it all going?' before falling back to sleep.

It took two hours, and two minutes after they were done I was walking back to my room. When the bandages came off on the third day I had a Frankenstein moment, when I saw a mass of 60 to 80 tiny stitches on my face. The swelling was so severe I looked like an alien. Seven

days later the bruising and swelling were almost gone.

I don't look like a 48-year-old anymore. The surgeon has taken me back to my mid-to-late thirties, when I was happy with my face. Before, I had a jowl I could grab hold of, but that's gone and my skin feels tighter, though still natural.

The facelift was never going to be a major event in my life. I haven't hung any hopes on it. There's no sense of adjusting to a new self. It is a subtle change that has given me an equally subtle lift in confidence, without compromising the essence of how I look. It's similar to the feeling you get after a good haircut. When I start to look tired again I won't hesitate to repeat this procedure. It's still my face and I'm still the same person, just one who has been permanently airbrushed.

Judi Coe 60, a divorced medical secretary from West Sussex, had a £9,000 facelift and eyelid reduction surgery with Nicholas Parkhouse at the McIndoe Surgical Centre in East Grinstead. She has one daughter, Aisha, 24

Before Nine years ago my husband of 15 years kissed me goodbye one morning, went to work and never came back. He disappeared, and I was left in shock. I finally tracked him down two years later living in China, but we never spoke again. It's taken me years, but now I have got a good job and a lovely house, and our daughter is happy. It's time I did something for me. Aisha said, 'Go for it, Mum.'

It's not that I'm looking for another man, and I'm not bothered about looking my age - people have said to me I don't need surgery, and I agree. I've got rid of all my

problems now, but I look in the mirror and think, 'Where did the last 25 years go?' Stress has a lot to do with how you look and I've been through plenty. I've had to keep up a good face - I couldn't crumble in front of my daughter while she was doing her GCSEs.

I had fillers 10 years ago, which sufficed then, but the last decade has taken it out of me. I've put weight on, and when your face plumps up what you really need is the knife. The contours of my face have changed dramatically and I have a scraggy neck. I could probably do with an abdominoplasty, but I can

disguise my ill-shaped body with clothes - the face is out there. This will be it; I won't have another facelift. I'll accept I'm a little old lady eventually. But I'm not ready to vegetate at home just yet.

After I woke up after the four-hour operation with drains and staples in my head, oxygen up my nose, stitches around my ears, cannulae in my hand and thrombosis stockings on my legs. It was uncomfortable, and I was groggy and screaming for my dinner, but I wasn't allowed to have any.

I was in the hospital for three days - I didn't want to go home! It was like a spa. The euphoria of the anaesthetic puts you on a high and you can't wait to see people, which is exhausting. Then on the third day after the operation it wears off and you

get a little depressed - you come back down to earth again and feel low for a day.

Now the scars have healed I think I look at least 10 years younger. My skin feels tighter, yet I haven't got that windswept look. You'd never know I'd been operated on. The only scars are in the crease of the ear, so you can't see them. I've been out without make-up on; that's how confident I feel. On Saturday I bumped into someone I hadn't seen in years. The first thing she said to me was, 'Wow, what have you been doing? You look terrific!' But everyone also said, 'Oh, you're still you,' when they saw me, which is exactly what I wanted. I have booked myself a personal trainer to lose a couple of stone. This has really kickstarted me. I feel I can do anything now. ●

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