

## Surgical facelift

### Fact Sheet

Surgical face lift (rhytidectomy) is a procedure to remove excess fat, tighten underlying tissues and redrape the skin of the face and neck. The overall effect is to reverse the signs of ageing - a surgical face lift can achieve this very dramatically. A surgical face lift can be performed by itself, but is commonly combined with other surgical procedures such as facial liposuction, eye bag removal or chin implants. Most facelift candidates will gain additional benefit from non surgical cosmetic treatment e.g. chemical peels or laser skin rejuvenation.

#### **Patient selection and preparation**

Surgical face lift can be performed on nearly everyone, but it is most successful when carried out on people with good bone structure whose facial tissues have begun to sag but still maintain some elasticity. Surgical face lift cannot get rid of sagging eyebrows or deal with deep lines in the forehead. Typically people undergoing surgical face lift are in their forties to sixties, but many older (and indeed younger) people can also benefit from face lift surgery.

At consultation our Consultant Facial Surgeon will fully explain the potential benefits and risks of a surgical face lift. This is your opportunity to ask about anything that concerns you, no matter how trivial. Not everybody is suitable for face lift surgery, and the decision to proceed will ultimately rest with our Consultant Surgeon.

#### **Preparation for surgery**

After the initial consultation, you will need to schedule a few weeks away from your normal busy routine for your face lift surgery. Typically you will need to stay in hospital for two to three days and then rest quietly for the next few weeks. If your hair is very short you might wish to let it grow before your facelift so that it is long enough to hide the scars while they heal. If you smoke, it is very important that you stop for at least two weeks before surgery. Not only will this make the anaesthetic go more smoothly, but smoking (even passive smoking) seriously interferes with wound healing. You will also be asked to stop taking any drugs that interfere with blood clotting e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin etc. This may need to be discussed with your General Practitioner. You should continue to take any other prescription medication as normal.

#### **The procedure**

When you come to the private hospital in Bristol on the day of surgery, you will be assessed by the Consultant Anaesthetist before your face lift surgery. It is important that you do not have anything to eat for six hours or anything to drink for three hours before surgery. Surgical face lift is

a procedure that requires general anaesthesia – the Consultant Anaesthetist will answer any questions you have about this aspect of treatment.

A surgical face lift can be a lengthy procedure, especially if being carried out in combination with other surgical procedures. A straightforward surgical face lift usually takes three to four hours. The incisions are made in the temple area above the hairline and run in front of and then behind the earlobe, following a natural line in front of the ear. If you choose to have liposuction to help correct a 'turkey neck' appearance, a separate small incision will be made under the chin. The surgical facelift procedure consists of delicately dissecting away the skin from the underlying muscle. Excess fat can be removed, the underlying muscle is tightened and the skin carefully repositioned to take up any slack. Wounds are closed with very fine stitches that will need to be removed after about a week. A more conservative (European) approach to surgical face lift results in a more natural final appearance.

### **Potential complications of surgical face lift**

Although the vast majority of people enjoy a straightforward recovery, as with all surgical procedures there are some possible complications of face lift surgery.

Possible complications of face lift surgery include:

- Excessive bleeding – a tiny plastic drainage tube is routinely left in the operation site to deal with this if it happens
- Injury to the nerves that control the facial muscles – this is usually temporary
- Infection and delayed healing – this is more likely in patients who smoke
- Untoward reactions to general anaesthesia

### **Recovery**

Any pain after surgery can be treated using painkillers – discomfort is usually minimal. You will be nursed with your head slightly elevated following surgery to help decrease any swelling. Your head will be loosely wrapped in bandages to reduce any swelling or bruising for a day or so. Any drainage tubes will normally be removed the day after surgery.

Bandages are removed completely within a few days. You may initially be disconcerted by your appearance – face lift surgery always causes bruising and puffiness – this is to be expected and will settle down over the next few weeks. All this will take a bit of getting used to and some people do get a bit 'down' at this stage.

### **At home**

After discharge from hospital you will ideally have someone to help look after you for a few days at home. You will need to rest quietly for at least two weeks to allow the healing process to take place. You should be especially gentle with your face and hair; you may be both tender and numb and your skin may not respond normally at first. You should avoid any strenuous activity for two weeks, although walking and gentle stretching are fine. You should contact us immediately if you experience any bleeding or sudden increase in pain.

### **Aftercare**

Our Consultant Surgeon will wish to see you two weeks after surgery to check that healing and progress are satisfactory. You will need to have the stitches in front of your ears removed after about a week. The stitches behind the ears will need to be removed a week later. After about three weeks you should be feeling pretty well back to normal. You will be able to get out and about and you may wish to return to your normal daily routine. You can wear makeup at this stage if you wish. Your skin may feel dry and rough for quite some time after a full facelift; we are happy to help with advice about appropriate skin treatments.

### **Results of treatment**

The final results of treatment are seen 3 – 4 months after the procedure. Any scarring will naturally fade and become scarcely visible with time.

Having a surgical face lift doesn't stop the clock; it merely turns back the hands. Your face will continue to age, but it is perfectly possible to have a mini lift or even another full face lift at a later stage, should you so wish. The beneficial effects of a surgical face lift typically last several years and sometimes longer.

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talk to **me**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this treatment please contact us on:

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