

Cosmetic Surgery Associates of New York

FACE LIFT SURGERY POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Below are general guidelines for patients undergoing facial cosmetic surgery. Each patient is different and each procedure is unique to that patient. All aspects of your postoperative care will be discussed with you and modified to your particular case.

***Facelift patients are typically seen the morning after surgery to remove the initial bandages placed during the procedure.**

***It is most important that you do not smoke or wear a nicotine patch for at least 2 weeks before and after surgery. Severe scarring may result from failure to observe this precaution.**

1) Please have someone available to drive you home from the office and remain with you the first night after surgery. You do not need medical care, only "TLC."

2) Go home to bed for at least 24 hours and do not get up except to go to the bathroom with assistance. Sleeping on two pillows will be more comfortable and helps to keep swelling down. Place a towel on the pillow in case of any drainage.

3) Swelling, bruising and discoloration of variable degree are normal. You can expect swelling and bruising (the "chipmunk look"), sometimes unevenly. Rarely are the two sides of the face the same at any one time. Each side heals at a different rate, but be assured the swelling and bruising will gradually subside over the first 10 days.

4) You may have a large cotton head bandage and drains when you arrive home. This helps to protect and cushion the surgery, and also to keep mild pressure on the suture lines. The large bandage and any drains you have are typically removed within 24 hours.

5) Cold compresses, ice packs, and warm compresses don't help swelling or bruising after a face lift, and may injure the skin--- so don't use them.

6) You may drink small amounts of liquids as desired and as tolerated the first night. The following day, a soft diet is suggested and after that you may eat and drink as desired, with the exception of alcohol, which must not be taken for three days after surgery.

7) Slight signs of blood may show on the bandages and this is normal. Very sudden swelling (ballooning up) in the cheek or neck area with stretched overlying skin, associated with a tight, hard feeling and sudden onset of pain may be a sign of new bleeding under the skin. Call the office immediately if this occurs. Overall swelling is normal.

8) Although you have been given a prescription for pain medication, you may only need regular Tylenol, and should try it first. If your stomach becomes irritated or upset, stop the medication. You may take Dramamine® (no prescription needed) to help any nausea.

Infection is uncommon after a face lift, but can occur. If you develop a fever or an area that becomes red, tender and swollen, call us.

Your neck and cheeks will be somewhat numb for weeks or months after surgery, particularly under the chin. This is normal. Your ears may be tender for a week or two---making them uncomfortable against the pillow, on the telephone, or with eyeglasses. This is also normal, and will pass soon.

The work done under the surface of your face and neck involves tightening the muscles. Thus you may feel tight for several weeks or months. It is minimal for some patients and much more apparent for others. In either case, it will fade with time.

It is common to see small bumps or long thin cords (like strings) under the skin of the neck or cheeks for a while after surgery. After the first week, massaging these with your fingertips (perhaps with some moisturizing cream) helps them to flatten and soften with time.

Avoid wearing any shirt or garment that slips over your head. Your ear lobes have been delicately sewn back in place, and it is very easy to catch an earlobe and detach it slightly. Also don't wear heavy or dangling earrings for 2-3 weeks.

For the first 2 weeks after surgery, sleep on your back and not on your side (as best you can). Keep your head elevated at least on 2 pillows. You'll find that your face will be much less swollen in the morning having kept your head up than if you were flat. The higher you keep your head above the level of your heart, the less the swelling.

Avoid strenuous activity, getting overheated and sun bathing for three weeks. Avoid blowing your nose, coughing, straining, and raising your blood pressure. Do not bend head down!

You may shower two days after surgery, and wash your hair three days after surgery. Your hair can be combed out gently with a large toothed comb, being careful around the stitches. With the stickiness and crustiness out of your hair, you'll feel and look better. Don't worry - the incisions are all sealed after 48 hours, so that soapy water won't cause an infection. Shower and shampoo your hair every day. It may take several attempts to fully clean it-- be gentle and use baby shampoo so it won't sting the eyes. Lots of soap and water keep the incision lines and stitches nice and clean, minimizing inflammation and promoting healing. Keep your head erect when washing your hair.

Please bring a scarf with you to the office on your first post-operative visit, as your hair may be disarrayed.

The incision lines around the ears and under the chin are usually pink, a little crusty, a little bumpy, and a little tender for weeks after the surgery. With time they will flatten and fade--- exactly how long varies from person to person. It can take months for scars to fully mature. If it takes longer than you expected, be patient; eventually the scars will become comfortable to you and inconspicuous to others.

You can drive yourself when you feel it's safe and comfortable. If your neck feels a little stiff, you may have difficulty looking over your shoulder, something you need to do when driving. Play it safe and use your own judgment.

On the 4th day after surgery you can start to wear makeup for camouflage and also begin to use your normal moisturizer.

As for activity and exercise, a leisurely or slightly brisk walk is OK as soon as you feel up to it. Wait 3-4 weeks for golf or tennis and then start slowly to see how you feel. The same goes for aerobics, nautilus and other strenuous exercise. If your face swells or you feel uncomfortable, hold off longer.

Often after surgery a patient will ask why he or she is more or less swollen or bruised than a friend who had a face lift; or why it's taking them several months for the tightness to resolve or the scars to fade when their sister-in-law was "perfect" after two weeks. The answer is that every patient has a somewhat different operation but more importantly, everyone heals differently. It just takes some people longer to resolve their swelling, absorb their bruises, and soften their tissues after surgery than others. This is mostly a matter of inheritance, like hair color and skin complexion. If you are taking longer than you thought, remember that the improvement that you get from surgery is going to last in some ways for the rest of your life.

Hair coloring can be done three weeks after surgery.

Call immediately if you experience any of the following: Fever > 101.0, shakes and chills, severe unrelieved pain, bright red blood from the incision site or sudden onset of significant swelling.

FOR ROUTINE QUESTIONS, CALL THE OFFICE WEEKDAYS BETWEEN 9 AND 5. FOR AN EMERGENCY, TELEPHONE ANYTIME, 914-761-8667