



## After your Rhytidectomy (Face Lift)

### Instructions and Information

- The following postoperative conditions are normal and should not cause alarm:
  - a. The entire face will be swollen for 2 to 3 weeks, but this will start resolving 48 hours after surgery. Swelling will usually be symmetric over the face but can be irregular.
  - b. Bruising, although generally localized, may be distributed throughout the face and will last for 1 to 2 weeks. The color may be purple or yellow even.
  - c. Numbness is customary around the ears and under the chin; feeling will come back slowly over several months.
  - d. Dimpling of the cheeks sometimes occurs but disappears within 2 to 3 weeks.
  - e. Pain around the ears, especially on pressure, may persist for several weeks.
  - f. A feeling of tightness behind the ears and upper neck will last for several days.
- Sutures will be removed between postoperative days 5-7 or so.
- You may wash your hair gently under the shower the day after surgery. Baby shampoo is recommended if you have also had a blepharoplasty.
- Makeup may be worn on the face immediately after surgery, but do not use on the incisions until they heal, usually within 2 weeks.
- Areas that are undergoing healing, especially in the neck, may feel firm for several weeks. They will eventually soften. This tightness peaks during the third week.
- Smoking is known to delay healing since the blood supply to the skin is reduced. To minimize possible complications such as skin loss and scarring, smokers must refrain from using tobacco 10 days before and 3 weeks after surgery. Nicotine alternatives such as the patch or gum still release the harmful vasoconstrictor and cannot be used.
- The convalescence period varies. Although most bruising disappears in just a couple or more weeks, residual swelling may last for a more extended time, maybe 8 to 12 weeks even. Your appearance is generally presentable in 3 weeks, though subtle surgical stigmata may persist for 4 to 6 weeks, usually easily camouflaged. Baseline healing is generally achieved at around 3 months, though soft tissue modeling can take up to 6 months or more, with subtle changes in this time frame.

The most sensitive areas are normally the cheekbones and around the ears, but you may also experience tightness in the neck or cheek as well.

There can be changes or resurgence in swelling or tenderness after several months. Please recognize that healing is not yet complete while there remains swelling and sensitive areas, and thus the final appearance has not yet been achieved.

General

Sutures

Washing

Makeup

Healing

Smoking

Convalescence

Healing

- A dictum about facial surgery might be phrased as follows:

The more extensive the surgery, the longer the convalescence, but the more impressive, and natural and longer lasting the results will be. Please ask, if not certain, what level of rhytidectomy has been planned for yourself, different maneuvers often selected to fit the individual anatomy or to minimize recovery.

### **How you will feel**

General

- You will feel drowsy following surgery. Medications have been given to help make sure you are comfortable.

Activity

- The day following surgery you may still feel a bit tired, but go ahead and begin to resume your normal activity level immediately. Your energy will return more rapidly if you begin resume usual activities rapidly.

Surgical site

- Surgical sites may feel a bit stiff for a few days following surgery. Gently movement and sensible return to activities should not disrupt anything, since the surgical sites have been reinforced to support throughout the convalescent period.

Nausea

- It is not unusual to have some nausea following surgery. This can be anaesthetic or medication-related. Most will fade within 6 to 8 hours after surgery. Nausea medication is effective in greater than 85% of cases, so it is sensible to stick to clear liquids if this persists.

Pain

- Post operative pain is often partially managed by local anaesthesia immediately following surgery, and so can surge in the hours following surgery. Do not be inhibited in using pain medicines for appropriate pain, using regular dosing regimens until pain has confidently subsided to tolerable levels. If the pain medicine disagrees with you in any way, switch to extra strength Tylenol. Most patients find that by the second to third post operative day this is adequate. Rarely is pain medicine required beyond days 4 to 5 after the surgery.

Antibiotics

- Antibiotics are usually used preoperatively. Infection following head and neck surgical procedures is uncommon. It would not be apparent for several days following surgery. If you notice increased redness, swelling or tenderness or fever at any time, please notify us so that we might address the situation. Low grade temperatures under 101.5°F are not uncommon following surgery for many patients; please notify our office if your temperature exceeds 101.5°F.