

Facelift Postoperative Instructions

The following instructions are based on experience with many facelift operations. They will answer many questions that may arise after your surgery. You and your family should read them several times so that you become familiar with them. Please follow these instructions faithfully; those who do so have the smoothest postoperative course and more satisfactory results.

Showering and Water Exposure

Please do not get your wound area wet until all bandages have been removed. After your bandages are off, you may shower and gently dry your wounds. After the first day, you may gently wash your face with mild soap and water. Try to avoid any vigorous cleaning of the suture line.

Wound Care

1. The suture line should be cleaned two to three times daily with a Q-tip or cotton ball soaked in hydrogen peroxide. (Be careful near the hairline if you have dark hair to avoid bleaching the hair.) Again, care should be taken because the sutures are delicate and can be broken if vigorously cleaned. Blot dry and apply an antibiotic ointment, such as Bacitracin, to the wound edges with a clean Q-tip so that a crust (scab) does not have a chance to form. Any over-the-counter antibiotic ointments will suffice (Bacitracin or Neosporin). If you develop a red, itchy, blistery area after you apply the antibiotic ointment, stop applying it because a small percentage of patients may develop an allergic reaction to it. Also, you may refrain from applying any ointment at night so as not to soil your bed sheets. Try to use a Q-tip or cotton ball instead of your fingers when applying ointment, because your fingers may be dirty and cause an infection in your suture line.
2. Sleeping at night with your head elevated with a couple of pillows will also help reduce your recovery time. Sleep on your back or side only.
3. Avoid any hot packs to your face because you may unknowingly burn yourself. After your surgery, your wound area will be numb for several weeks, and you may burn yourself if you apply too hot an object (such as a curling iron to your hair, or even if you blow dry your hair) near or on your operated skin.
4. If you routinely wear makeup, please refrain from doing so for at least the first week after surgery. Makeup may cause significant irritation to the skin and also adversely affect your wound healing. Further, perfumes and colognes may irritate your wounds, so try to minimize or abstain from using these kinds of products near your wounds during the first week as well. If you had a brow lift or facelift, or any surgery near the hairline, please postpone any planned permanent waves or hair coloring for 4 weeks following surgery.
5. Avoid any excessive rubbing or scratching of the wound area because this may disrupt the suture line or cause darkening of your skin. If you should have severe itchiness around the wound area, contact us immediately so that we may prescribe medication to alleviate your symptoms.

Antibiotics

If we prescribed antibiotics, please take them as directed. It is recommended that you take your antibiotics with food to minimize any chance of an upset stomach. If you are nauseated, please wait until the nausea has subsided before resuming your antibiotics. If you develop diarrhea, please stop taking your antibiotics. If your diarrhea should persist, please contact us regarding this matter. If you should develop a fever (>100.5 F) after the first 2 days, please let us know as well.

Pain Management

Please take the prescribed pain medication if you have significant discomfort after surgery. Please be sure not to take your pain medication more frequently than prescribed. Also, because this medication is a narcotic you are advised against driving or operating any machinery while taking it. Further, you should not partake of any alcohol when using narcotic pain medications. If you have only mild pain, you may take plain Tylenol to alleviate your symptoms. However, if you take plain Tylenol, you should wait 4 hours before resuming your other pain medications because they frequently already have Tylenol in them, and you do not want to overdose on Tylenol. You should also avoid taking any other pain medications, especially aspirin or aspirin-related products (see the Preoperative Instruction Sheet for a partial list of aspirin and aspirin-related medications.) You should report any unexplained pain to us immediately.

Bruising and Swelling

It is normal that you have moderate or even significant bruising and swelling after surgery for the first 2 weeks. You will notice every day that the bruising and swelling are diminishing. However, if you develop any new-onset swelling, especially in the first 2 to 3 days, please let us know immediately.

Sun Exposure

Excessive exposure to sun in the first 3 weeks after surgery may result in prolonged facial swelling and injury to the skin. Also, excessive sun exposure to your wound area may cause your wound to darken (hyperpigment) in relation to the surrounding skin. If you must go into the sunlight, wear a wide-brimmed hat and apply one of the SPF 15 sun-block preparations, preferably with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide available at your pharmacy or our office.

Exercise and Activity

For the first 2 weeks, please refrain from bending over or straining very hard. It is acceptable to begin light walking 24 hours after surgery. Jogging and light non-contact exercise should not be resumed until 2 weeks, whereas strenuous sports require 6 weeks of healing before being safely resumed.

Other Things to Avoid

Please reread the Preoperative Instruction Sheet carefully and review all the medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements that you should avoid before and after surgery, including the advice about smoking and drinking. If you should have any questions about your surgery or any of the instructions written above, please do not hesitate to contact us.