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## Post Operative Instructions for Face, Neck Lift, or Blepharoplasty

The following instructions are based on experience with many face lift operations. They will answer practically every question that may arise regarding the "do's" and "don'ts" after surgery. You and your family should read them several times so that you may become thoroughly familiar with them. Attempt to follow them faithfully - those who do so generally have the smoothest postoperative course; this, of course, favors proper healing.

- **SWELLING**

Every operation, no matter how minor, is accompanied by swelling of the surrounding tissues. The amount varies from person to person, but it always seems more in the face since there is looseness of the tissues and because even a small amount makes the features appear distorted. Sometimes the swelling becomes a little greater the second day after your operation. It may became more pronounced along the jaw line and is generally worse when you first arise in the morning (proof that it is better to stay up as much as possible as soon as you get out of bed). The swelling itself is not serious and is not an indication that something is going wrong with your operation.

- **DISCOLORATION**

It is not unusual to have varying amounts of discoloration about the face. Like the swelling, it may become more pronounced, especially in the neck, after the first day or so, but remember this is temporary.

- **TURNING THE HEAD**

AVOID turning the head or bending the neck. When you must turn, move the shoulders and head as one unit or as though you had a "stiff neck".

- **PAIN**

There is usually little actual pain following a face lift, but you may experience a deep bruised sensation as a result of the swelling, and the face may seem heavy. As is usually the case with such things, this seems worse at night and when one becomes nervous.
Under no circumstances should ASPIRIN, IBUPROFEN, or medications containing aspirin or salicylates or ibuprofen, be taken without first consulting us. Be sure to check the labels of any pain medications you already have or any you purchase from the drug store.
Unfortunately, the usually-prescribed pain killers often cause sensations of light-headedness, particularly in the immediate post-operative period and, consequently, seem to make recovery tedious. Therefore, it is better to try the application of cold compresses before resorting to drugs. If this is not effective take the prescribed pain medication.
If the pain is severe, notify our office and stronger medication can be ordered for you.

- **ICE COMPRESSES**

Wash towels (not an ice bag) dipped in ice chips applied across the jaws and neck for twenty minutes several times daily during the first 3 days may help reduce swelling, discomfort, and discoloration. They may be placed in a plastic wrapper (baggie, etc.) to avoid wetting the dressing and your clothing.

- **REMOVAL OF DRESSING**

A pressure dressing will be applied before you leave the operating room; it is to remain in place until the following morning. You should be as quiet as possible during this time; therefore, a great deal of talking and having too many visitors are discouraged. If your dressing begins to feel excessively tight or uncomfortable, please let us know.

- **ELEVATE HEAD OF BED**

To help minimize swelling, the head of the bed should be elevated 30-40 degrees both while you are in the hospital and when you go home.

- **MEDICATIONS**

An antibiotic is prescribed for you. This is begun one day before surgery and continued for one week. Specific medications for pain, are prescribed for you. Take these medications only if you feel they are needed. Continue taking the vitamins postoperatively.

- **GETTING OUT OF BED**

We usually recommend you remain in bed during the first 12 hours following surgery after which you may sit in a chair, walk to the bathroom, or around your room.

- **STOOL**

Avoid STRAINING at the stool. Tell us if you need a laxative or a stool softener and we will prescribe one for you.

- **AFTER SURGERY**

If you live out of the area, we prefer you to stay in town at a hotel, motel, or with a friend beginning the morning after surgery. You should plan to stay in the area for 2-3 days after surgery.

- **SWELLING**

As previously explained, your face and neck will remain swollen with varying amounts of discoloration for several days.

The main thing to remember is that such swelling eventually subsides; you can help in several ways:

**1.** STAY UP (sitting, standing, walking around) as much as possible on your first post-operative day. IMPORTANT! Of course, you should rest when you tire.

**2.** AVOID BENDING OVER OR LIFTING heavy things for one week. Besides aggravating swelling, this may raise the blood pressure and start hemorrhage.

**3.** AVOID HITTING OR BUMPING YOUR FACE, HEAD AND NECK. It is wise not to pick up small children and you should sleep alone for one week after your operation.

**4.** SLEEP WITH THE HEAD OF THE BED ELEVATED for 1-2 weeks after your operation. To accomplish this, place two or three pillows under the head of the mattress and one or two on top of it. Try not to roll on your face; this tends to tear down the supporting stitches used under the skin of your face; therefore, it is necessary to sleep on your back for 2 weeks. Some patients find a reclining chair placed at 45 degree angle to be more comfortable.

**5.** SUPPORT THE SWOLLEN TISSUES with a chin sling applied according to the directions we will give you.

Wear it constantly until one week has elapsed from the date of your operation; then it should be worn during sleep until 2 weeks has elapsed from the day of your surgery. It is beneficial to wear the sling during the day when you are alone during the first 30 day period.

**6.** AVOID EXCESSIVE SUNNING of the face for one month; ordinary exposure is not harmful.

- **DISCOLORATION**

Sometimes the discoloration may become more obvious after you have been discharged. It usually lasts not more than two weeks, all the while decreasing in intensity. The measures previously described that help the swelling to subside will also help the discoloration; however, there is no medication which well cause it to disappear rapidly,
only "tincture of time."
You can camouflage the discoloration to some extent by using a thick make-up, PANCAKE, by Max Factor (two shades darker than your skin color), may be applied with a moist sponge; after it dries, a second layer may be applied.
It can be removed with water. Revlon-Erase (two shades darker than your skin color) may be used over "hard to cover" areas. Do not apply make-up over the incisions themselves for several days after the sutures have
been removed; however, you can bring it up to the line of the incisions.

- **BLEEDING**

If bleeding does occur, go to bed, elevate the head, apply ice compresses about the face and neck, and report it by telephone. If the bleeding has not subsided within 20 minutes of holding pressure report it to us immediately by phone. You will probably be told to return to the office.

- **TEMPERATURE**

Generally, the body temperature does not rise much above 100 degrees following the face lift, this rise is due to the healing process. Patients will often think they have increased temperature because they feel warm, but in reality,
do not. To be sure, you should measure your temperature by mouth. Report any persistent temperature above
100 degrees, however.

- **WEAKNESS**

It is not unusual after a person has an anesthetic or any type of operation for them to feel weak, have palpitations,
break out in "cold sweats", or get dizzy. This generally clears up a few days without medication.

- **INSOMNIA**

When there is too much difficulty in sleeping in the post-operative period, we will prescribe a sedative. It should be
remembered that such drugs also tend to make some people feel light-headed and weak and should be taken
only if needed.

- **DEPRESSION**

It is not unusual for an individual to go through a period of mild depression after cosmetic surgery because, no matter how much they wanted the operation beforehand and how much they were told about what to expect post-operatively, they are shocked when they see their face swollen and, perhaps, discolored.
Be realistic and realize that this is a very temporary condition which will subside shortly. The best "treatment" consists of busying one's self with the details of post-operative care and trying to divert one's attention to other thoughts.

- **NUMBNESS**

Parts of the face, neck, and ears sometimes feel weak or "numb" after the face lift operation, but this is usually temporary.

- **TIGHTNESS OF THE FACE**

The skin of the face may feel tight for a while and you may feel that it interferes with your smile; this will disappear within a few weeks.

- **THINNING OF THE HAIR**

There may be transient thinning of the hair in areas adjacent to the suture lines in the temple and behind the ear.

- **IF YOU INJURE YOUR FACE**

Many individuals sustain accidental hits on the face during the early post-operative period. Usually one need not to be too concerned, unless the blow is hard or if bleeing or considerable swelling occurs. Report the incident at the next office visit or by telephone if your are sufficiently concerned.

- **RESUME ACTIVITIES**

**1.** WEARING GLASSES AND CONTACT LENS: EYE GLASSES may be worn as soon as the bandages are removed. CONTACT LENSES may be inserted the day after your surgery.
**2.** HAIR AND BODY CARE. You may wash your hair with luke warm water in a shower and comb it out with a large toothed comb on the second day after surgery. You may HAVE YOUR HAIR WASHED at a salon one week after your surgery, but do not use the usual type heat hair dryer, use a had blow dryer, on low and cool setting. Be careful not to rest your neck on the rim of the wash bowl in the area of the incisions. Hair coloring should also be delayed until six weeks after your surgery.
Use cotton balls to WASH THE FACE gently with a mild soap ( Ivory, Neutrogena) twice daily after the first week, use a gentle upward motion.
You may take a shower by the second post-operative day, but NEVER on the day when you have sutures removed.
**Do not TWEEZE THE EYEBROWS for one week**
You may wear a WIG regularly if you wish after surgery as long as it doesn't fit directly over the stitches or clips.
**3.** HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES. You may be up and around the house with your usual activities except those specifically outlined previously.
**4.** PULL-OVER CLOTHING. You should wear clothing that fastens either in the front or at the back rather than the type that must be pulled over the head for one week.
**5.** ATHLETICS. No swimming, strenuous athletic activity or exercises that involve turning the head for 4 weeks.
**6.** KEEPING A "STIFF" FACE AND NECK. You should not move the face and neck excessively until the skin heals to the underlying tissues. Toward this end:
**(a)** AVOID excessive grinning and smiling.
**(b)** Don't TURN THE HEAD without turning the neck and shoulders as one unit, when you must turn, do so as if you had a "crick" in the neck, for 2 weeks.
**(c)** Don't BEND the head forward or extend the neck backward for the same period.
**(d)** AVOID gum or foods that are hard to chew. Soups, mashed potatoes, stewed chicken, hamburger steak, or any easily-chewable food is permissible; steaks, French bread, etc., should not be used for a least one week.
**(e)** AVOID yawning with the mouth opened widely for two weeks.

- **7. <u>RETURNING TO WORK AND RESUMING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.</u>**

When you should return to work depends on the amount of physical activity and public contact your job involves and also the amount of swelling and discoloration you develop; the average patient may return to work or go out socially 2-3 weeks after surgery when these factors are minimal- you will have to play this by ear!
Do not drive for 2 weeks.

- **<u>YOUR SCARS</u>**

After all stitches have been removed, the scars will appear a deep pink color. There will be varying amounts of swelling in and around the scars themselves. With the passage of time, the pink will become white, the firmness of the scar will soften, and they will become less noticeable. Each individual varies with respect to healing, but it takes approximately one year for these changes to occur in most scars.

- **<u>DAILY CARE</u>**

**1.** Go over your suture lines 2-3 times daily with peroxide on a Q-tip around the front and the back of your ears. Apply a small amount of Bacitracin Ointment to the suture lines around the front and back of the ear.
**2.** Apply peroxide to staples also, but never use the ointment on the staples, only peroxide. Use the ointment only on the suture lines around the ears but never in the hair.
**3.** The second day after surgery let warm water run through while showering. Two to four days after surgery you may use Johnson's Baby Shampoo. If you had eyelid surgery do not be afraid to get sutures around the eyes wet when showering.
**4.** Report any excessive bleeding that persists after pressure for 20 minutes.
**5.** Report any signs of infection such as excessive swelling, redness, or drainage.
**6.** Avoid taking medications on an empty stomach.
**7.** Never wash your hair the day of staple removal, wash it the following day, using baby shampoo only.

- **<u>YOUR FIRST OFFICE VISIT</u>**

Soon after arriving home you should call the office for an appointment. This should be done soon because special preparations must be made for your visit in advance of your arrival- these are different from the usual office routine.
Don't build up a feeling of fear and anxiety about what is going to be done to you on the occasion of your first post-operative visit to the office. A few of the skin sutures may be removed and the progress of your healing will be checked. Removing sutures is quick and unaccompanied by pain because it is done with small delicate instruments to minimize discomfort. You will probably feel much better after the first office visit. Similar treatment will be given during subsequent office visits. Ordinarily, ALL SUTURES are removed within two weeks from the day of your surgery. During this interim, do not disturb them yourself. Occasionally, crusting will occur around the sutures; we will soften and remove some during each office visit.

- **<u>FINALLY</u>**

Remember the things you were told before your operation, namely:
**1.** When the bandages are first removed, the face will appear swollen and there will be varying amounts of discoloration. This swelling will subside to a very large extent within two weeks; however, it will take 6-8 weeks for all the swelling to disappear and for your face to reach its final contour.
**2.** The discoloration will gradually disappear over a period of 10-14 days in most cases. We have yet to encounter a case where it persisted permanently.

**3.** Report
**(a)** Temperature elevation
**(b)** Sudden swelling or discoloration
**(c)** Discharge from wound or other evidence of infection
**(d)** Bleeding
**(e)** Development of any drug reaction
**Most of all, BE PATIENT during the healing process. If you have further questions, you are urged to call the office at 210-270-8595**