

Botox – across forehead and between brows to reduce frown lines, and beside outer corners of eyes to reduce crow's feet
£390

Lower blepharoplasty – excess under-eye fat cut away and skin tightened
£2,415

Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) treatment – on cheeks and nose to eradicate red veins and sun damage
£250

Filler – three syringes of Juvéderm to plump out lines between nose and mouth
£785

Microneedling with PRP (platelet rich plasma) – tiny holes are pricked into skin around the mouth with a Dermalroller and own blood injected to stimulate skin rejuvenation
£500

SUKI DHANDA

Lower face-lift – incisions made behind ears; skin and musculature of face pulled back to tighten lower cheeks and neck
£6,200 (face-lift and eye-lift package with hospital fees = £11,220)

**TOTAL COST
 £13,145**

Diary of my face-lift

YOU columnist *Liz Jones*, 52, has always hated the way she looks, particularly as she got older, so she decided to have a face-lift. Here she gives a brutally honest account of her cosmetic-surgery experience – and reveals her new face in all its line-free glory...

Main photographs SUKI DHANDA ►



Liz before her surgery



Mr Karidis recommends a lower face-lift

March 2011

9 Wednesday
(68-297)

*First consultation -
feeling nervous*

'Hmmm,' says Mr Alex Karidis, consultant plastic surgeon, the man responsible for the gravity- and age-defying faces of more stars than he can count, and who now has my face in his hands. 'The sagging, here and here, where the fat has slipped from your cheeks and become hamsterish, we could get rid of that. I would definitely do something about the crevasses below your eyes. Your forehead needs help, and we need to get rid of the saggy flesh beneath your chin, here.' And he touches my turkey wobble.

In his sunny clinic in St John's Wood, North London, he sits me in front of a mirror as, placing his hands behind my ears, he lifts my 52-year-old flesh to show me what the finished effect might be if I surrender to his scalpel. 'Have a look,' he says.

'No, I don't want to.' I've never been fond of my face, not even when I was young and it hadn't oozed like lava down a slippery slope to disappointment. Aged five, I became obsessed about my flat profile, and sat at my desk in primary school in such a way that nobody could see me side-on. I never look in mirrors or at photos of myself. Then, using my new laptop a few weeks ago, I must have clicked a button by mistake because

I've never been fond of my face, not even when it hadn't oozed like lava down a slippery slope to disappointment

suddenly there I was, looking back at myself on the webcam. I looked like Captain

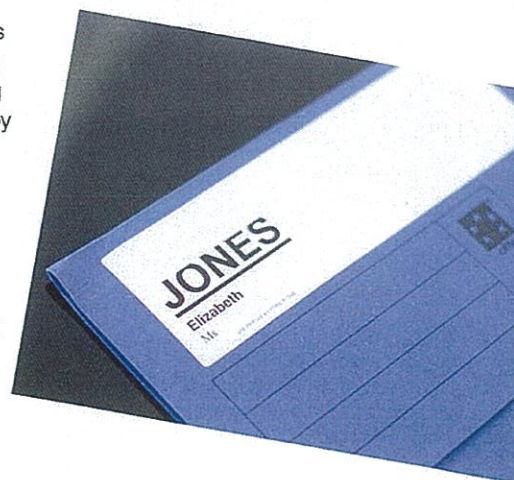
Pugwash, with Michael Jackson's hair.

That surprise webcam appearance prompted me to make an appointment with Mr Karidis to see if something could be done. He came highly recommended by a model friend in her 40s. I was convinced he would suggest a course of facials, maybe a chemical peel, but hadn't expected to be told I need a face-lift. I've always looked after my face. I never sunbathe, I never laugh that much and I have never smoked, so I hadn't expected to get crow's feet around my eyes or a cat's bottom pucker at my mouth. Now, as Mr Karidis examines my face with dispassion, I tell him I feel cheated that I need surgery because I always cleanse, tone and moisturise, using the most expensive unguents money can buy. His lack of interest in creams speaks volumes. He is brutally honest. His chief nurse tells me that he is one of the few top face men who turns women away, too.

And so I agree to the following. A face-lift, which will involve incisions made behind my ears and up into my hair, then the skin and underlying musculature pulled up and back, thus improving

the hamster pouches by my mouth, and the turkey neck. A lower blepharoplasty, which involves an incision beneath my lower eyelashes, the excess under-eye fat being cut away and the skin tightened. He tells me

I don't need a brow lift; instead, Botox will be injected across my forehead, between my eyes, and also beside the outer corners where most of us have crow's feet. To plump up the skin around my mouth, a Demaroller will be used to prick thousands of tiny holes into my skin while I'm under general anaesthetic. A tiny sample of my blood is taken, then centrifuged to separate the serum blood cells and platelets. The platelet-rich portion is then extracted and injected back into the tiny holes, stimulating my skin (which thinks it is being assaulted, as it most definitely is) into making more collagen, the natural substance that keeps skin plump, and that thins as we age. The face-lift will soften the crevasses running from nose to mouth but not eradicate them entirely, so a synthetic filler will be injected once I have recovered from the operation. And finally I'm to have one session of Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) treatment to eradicate the red veins and sun damage on my face. I may need more IPL - a lot will depend on how my face heals, and whether I do as I am told, and avoid hot baths, alcohol and the sun.



SUKI DHANDA, JOE FLUPHER

*Surgery Day - Saturday 19
(78-287)
Is it too late
to change my mind?*

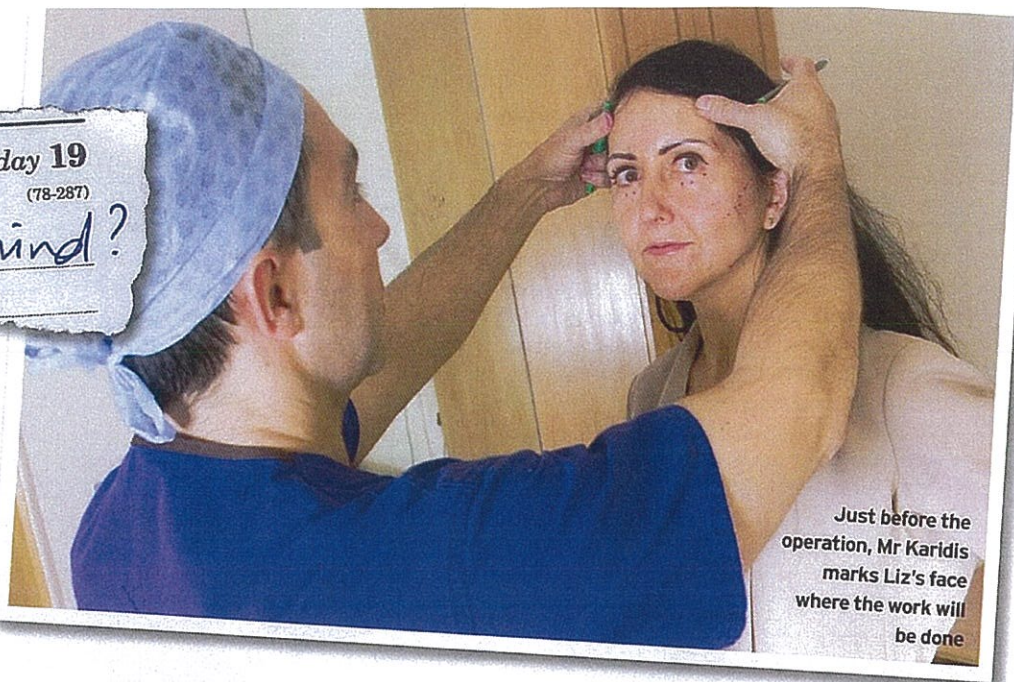
On a sunny Saturday morning, I sit in my room at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth in London undergoing a battery of tests (an ECG to make sure I won't die of a heart attack, blood pressure, temperature) before I am put under anaesthetic. I'm incredibly nervous, especially when I sign the consent form and read all the things that can go wrong (permanently watering eyes, a lopsided face, infection, hair loss, death), and I almost back out. Why am I going through surgery, with all its risks, when other people have real illnesses? Isn't having cosmetic surgery the most anti-feminist action I could possibly take?

I've had plastic surgery before. When I was 29, I had a breast reduction. I was ashamed of my breasts, which had grown because I'd been force-fed hormones in a bid to cure my anorexia, which I'd suffered from since I was 11. While the operation made me pleasingly flat-chested, it also left me with terrible scars, and misshapen nipples with no sensation. I remember the surgeon telling me that I would never be able to breastfeed. Looking down at my poor sore chest, I hardly thought that would be a problem, given that I'd never allow myself to be seen naked again.

So, why do it again? I want another chance to face the world. I dye my hair, I've had veneers on my teeth, laser eye surgery... I'm already practically Lindsay Wagner, the Bionic Woman. I'd love to look less miserable, to go out without make-up, and not scare the postman. As I'm led down to the operating room at 4pm, I'm fatalistic rather than scared. I sit on a bed, looking at the surgery list pinned to the wall. After two young men here for liposuction (really?), I'm last on the list. The nurse asks if there is anyone I want her to call when I come round, or if I'm expecting visitors. 'God no,' I say. I've told only one person: Nic, my assistant, who looks after my animals. I haven't told my boyfriend, as I didn't want him to freak out and persuade me not to go through with it, which is the sort of thing men do.

I'm nervous when I sign the consent form and read all the things that can go wrong

YOU 12 JUNE 2011



Just before the operation, Mr Karidis marks Liz's face where the work will be done

Later - NEVER felt so awful

When I start to come round after two and a half hours of surgery, I am blind. My eyes have been bandaged and this, coupled with the fact I'm almost deaf anyway, means I'm a barely sentient blob in bandages. Someone takes my blood pressure so often I can soon no longer bear the pain in my arm, so instead they use a leg. I'm nauseous, with a terrible headache, which no amount of drugs seems to alleviate. In the middle of the night I throw up all down my gown. I'm changed, like a baby. This is the worst night of my life. My face hurts. I can't move, sit up or sleep.

Bandages removed

Sunday 20

(79-286)

Mr Karidis arrives to remove my bandages and look at his handiwork. When I open my eyes, everything is blurry. I panic, but he explains this is because of the antibiotic cream in my eyes, and says I won't see clearly for three or four days. 'Do you want to look in a mirror?' he asks, his nurse, Jasmine, at his side, a young woman I will become pitifully attached to over the next few weeks. 'No!' I try to yell, but I can hardly open my mouth, so tight is my skin stretched towards my ears.

That afternoon, I am due to be driven to the new Waldorf Astoria Hotel in the grounds of Syon House, West London, where Mr Karidis has treatment rooms in the Kallima Spa for his nonsurgical offerings (fillers, Botox, etc). I am to be visited by him and a nurse every day during my week-long recovery. If I had gone home - which I

can't, given that I have so many pets who will jump up, risking infection - I would have had to have someone with me for the first three or four days as I was told to rest. People with young children are told to warn them first, in case they are terrified!

I tell my nurse I can't get up. Eventually, she helps me into the bathroom to wash my hair (a ritual that has to be done daily, to avoid infection) and I throw up green bile; I haven't eaten for 48 hours. Jasmine arrives to gather my things, and I'm wheeled, wearing a 'face garment', a bit like a nun's habit, to reception. I must wear it continually for the first week to keep the swelling down, and then as often as I can over the next few weeks. As I climb into the cab, I can see the driver glance at me in his rear-view mirror, then look away, shocked.

At the hotel, I am put to bed by Jasmine with a list of instructions. I must hold ice packs to my face for 15 minutes of every hour. I must drink lots of water >



Liz has to wear her supportive 'face garment' as much as possible for the first few weeks

33



With the bandages finally off, Liz's face looks swollen

◀ and take painkillers, plus amica tablets to reduce the swelling. Because of my blurred vision, I can't read or watch TV. But I'm too ill to care. The night is the second worst of my life: the pain in my head, coupled with the feeling of being stretched, is almost unbearable. I am only allowed to sleep on my back, propped up with pillows. I can't eat, because I can't open my mouth. I can't even insert a toothbrush. Everything Mr Karidis told me would happen has come to pass. He said I would hate myself, and hate him for doing this to me. 'It will be a roller-coaster ride,' he said. 'And it will get worse before it gets better. The swelling will increase by day three before it starts to go down.'

'It will be a roller-coaster ride,' said Mr Karidis. 'And it will get worse before it gets better'

22 Tuesday
(61-284) Tax Week 51

At last
I feel a bit better

I am now sitting up, and able to drink a fruit smoothie and swallow soup. The member of staff assigned to look after me is tireless, bringing endless buckets of ice, and copious plates of pineapple, which is good for reducing swelling. Mr Karidis arrives in the afternoon to remove the stitches beneath my eyes. I can see, now, how women fall in love with their plastic surgeons. I look forward to his visits to check on my progress. 'Once the swelling has gone down, and we have given you the Botox and the filler, you will be perfect!' he says. No man has ever called me that before.

I spend the entire seven days in my lovely hotel room, staring at the Capability Brown landscaped gardens. I am bored rigid, unable to talk on the phone as I'm not allowed to place anything on my ear; it's too painful, anyway. But this recovery time is part of the process, a full stop in your life before you emerge as someone different. Jasmine checks my stitches, and by day five she is trying to encourage me to venture into the exquisite Syon House itself wearing a headscarf and dark glasses; the pool is out of bounds, though, for at least three weeks. But I still look too terrifying. By day five, I've broken the habit of a lifetime and looked in the bathroom

mirror. I'm aghast at what has happened to my face. It is all lumpy. My lower eyelids droop. There are broken blood vessels around my mouth. I'm bruised and battered. I panic. At least with my breast reduction, terrible as the scarring was, I'd got home and looked at my torso beneath a white T-shirt, and been thrilled. I was gratifyingly androgynous. Now, though, I look worse. 'I look like a cod,' I tell Jasmine. She tells me not to worry, that the swelling will go down and my eyes will return to normal, as long as I do my exercises (stretching the skin upwards gently with my fingers, holding for a few seconds, as many times a day as I can be bothered). This restores elasticity in this very delicate area.

Sunday 27

Going home

(86-278)

British Summer Time Begins

YIPPEE!

Slowly I get better. My sight is almost back to normal. Today, I'm pronounced fit to drive, so I go home. My collies are shy at first, because I look so different, what with the Julie Andrews headwear. I remember when my mum, aged 50, had all her teeth out, our labrador Pompey barked ferociously because he didn't recognise her. At that age, my mum considered herself an old woman. She never dyed her hair or went to the gym. It was normal to have a full set of dentures. What a difference a generation makes.

I've been given more rules: I mustn't exercise, or fall over, and I mustn't wear a hard hat, so I can't ride, or jog with my dogs. I still have stitches behind my ears and in my hair; these will eventually dissolve but now they itch.

April 2011

5 Tuesday
(86-270) Tax Week 53

Posh work
do tonight -
EEK!

I'm in a panic because tonight I have a posh work do. I have to look normal. My hair hides my stitches, and I put on make-up for the first time since the surgery. I apply eyeliner to hide the scars under my eyes, and a lot of shading on the side of my face. A man I worked with 12 years ago comes up to me. 'You look amazing,' he says. I put my face to the test a week later, having dinner with my best friend. 'Do you notice anything different?' I ask her. 'Well, when I walked into your flat I thought you looked really well... have you had work done?' ▶

21 Monday
(60-285)

Feeling even
WORSE

The swelling, despite the ice, has got worse. My face and ears are numb. I can feel stitches and a lot of dried blood inside my ears. Why has he made incisions inside my ears? I feel the back of my head, and find the stitches snake up through my hair. My eyes droop at the edges, and are lined with black thread. They are also curiously round, and my whole face is tinged with yellow from the bruising. I like the feel of my chin, though. There is no loose skin any more; instead, my heart-shaped face has reappeared. I have been given just one cream, to use three times a day on the area around my mouth, my muzzle, to calm the redness from the Dermaroller. I am given, too, a factor-50 sunscreen, which I must wear for life. 'You must look after my handiwork,' is all Mr Karidis will say.

18 Monday

(108-257)

I LOVE
my new face

A month after the operation, I go back to the Kallima spa to be signed off by Mr Karidis and for my finishing touches. My stitches have come away, the incisions have healed, but my face, eyes and ears are still numb, and I haven't recovered my sense of taste, but he assures me this will all settle down after about another five months. Filler, buckets of it, is injected into the lines by my mouth. I think this is my favourite part: instant, youthful plumpness that will last about eight months. Another revelation is Botox. Mr Karidis performs something called 'soft Botox': it allows some movement, rather than the unreal result that would have turned me into Nicole Kidman. He injects a tiny amount into my forehead and at the sides of my eyes. I would recommend it to anyone: it's like magic, and because I can't frown I don't feel as worried; no wonder Botox is beginning to be prescribed to people suffering from depression. I also have IPL to get rid of brown spots on my face, and the tiny red veins.

I can understand how people become addicted to cosmetic procedures. I now feel my hands don't match my face, so I return on 3 May for more IPL on the brown spots. Two weeks after having the filler, my mouth is pulled around by my dentist, which I feel has made me look lopsided, so I return for a top-up. The other day, I was on a photo shoot with a famous model, and noticed she had thread veins on her legs, and a big mole on her neck. 'How can she live with such flaws?' I think. It's easy to get one's own faults out of proportion, so they become magnified. I think I am going to stop now with my tinkering. The scars below my eyes are only visible in a magnifying mirror. I marvel that things are no longer where they used to be. Hairs that used to sprout predictably in certain places on my throat have now relocated like fir trees that have moved down a mountainside in an avalanche. My assistant, Nic, asks me whether it was worth it, if I would do it again, and I am still not sure. I still haven't looked at my face; I've only seen bits of it in a hand mirror. I think I still look like me, because when I saw my sister four weeks after surgery she didn't even pass comment. I don't know that I look younger, just less exhausted.

And for anyone who might think I have this done to keep a man, let me tell you how fruitless this would be. Other than a puzzled glance from my boyfriend a few weeks after the surgery, he hasn't even noticed. For the first three weeks, you are not allowed to kiss anyone (not even dogs!) and you most certainly are not allowed to have someone run their fingers through your hair. But this is nothing new for him, used as he is to my peccadillos (I always sit next to him in a restaurant, rather than across the table, which I'd find too like being under the spotlight). But the other night, I pulled up a chair opposite him, and he was able to gaze at me. I still haven't told him what I've done. 'You are beautiful,' he said. I know I'm not. But at least these days I can look the world squarely in the face. I think I now have the one I deserve. **Y**

Contact Alex Karidis MD FRCS, tel: 020 7432 8727, nipntuck.co.uk. Liz stayed at London Syon Park, a Waldorf Astoria Hotel, Middlesex TW7 6AZ, londonsyonpark.com. To book a stay (from £279 per night for a double room) or nonsurgical treatments with Mr Karidis at the hotel's Kallima Spa, tel: 020 7870 7777

For more exclusive photos
of Liz, go to you.co.uk

YOU 12 JUNE 2011



I can
understand
how people
become
addicted to
cosmetic
procedures

Liz's transformation is complete