

POST OPERATIVE CARE INSTRUCTIONS

FACE LIFT SURGERY:

- Try and arrange to have either a friend or family member to pick you up and to stay with you for the first 24-48 hours in order to help you get settled in around the house.
- Everyone recovers from their anaesthetic differently. Some people feel no side effects while others are more noticeably affected, feeling tired and even sick for the first couple of days. It may be difficult to chew normally in the initial post operative phase due to tightness and swelling. Eat lightly with soft meals such as smoothies and soups. If necessary, cut food into small bite-sized pieces to facilitate chewing and digestion. Salty foods can contribute to fluid retention and swelling so keep these to a minimum in the first 7-10 days. In order to avoid constipation, eat plenty of fresh vegetables and dried fruits. Overall, try to eat a balanced diet to ensure your body is getting all the important nutrients it needs in the immediate postoperative healing period.
- Drink plenty of fluids in the form of water and fresh juices, in the first few days after surgery. Avoid caffeine and carbonated drinks in the first few days. Dairy products in the first 72 hours after surgery can upset your stomach and make you feel sick and therefore it would be sensible to limit these.
- Do wear comfortable front opening and loose clothing at night and in the day, that do not need to be pulled over your head. Due to the fact that there is likely to be some degree of soiling or staining from the suture sites, try to use old bed and pillow linen.
- **Patients need to understand that the post operative period following a facelift can be quite a daunting one.** It is not so much a question of pain although the bandages can make it feel quite tight. This is partly due to the bandages and partly due to the muscle tightening that is performed at the time of the surgery. As such even after the bandages are removed your face will still feel tight and will continue to feel so in the first few days, particularly as the swelling starts to set in. As a result of this tightening, you will also feel that you cannot open or close your mouth properly (even though you actually can!) **You will initially look in the mirror and probably be shocked that you do not look anything like the fresher better face you were hoping to achieve with the facelift!** In fact you will probably feel you look hideous, swollen, distorted and uneven. During this time, many patients actually hate both themselves and their surgeon for having done this. This is NORMAL! It will however settle in the next 2-3

weeks and you will once again start to like your surgeon and be pleased with yourself for doing it!

- You will be obviously swollen and bruised for the first few days following surgery. The swelling usually peaks at 48 -72 hours postoperatively then starts to dissipate after this period of time. You should therefore try to sit upright as much as possible to help reduce the swelling. At night use an extra pillow. Do not put your head below the level of the heart and avoid any straining. *It is advised that you purchase a cold compress prior to surgery, or have something cold to apply to the face and neck close at hand.* Apply cool compresses to the face intermittently over your facial garment(see below) in the first 72 hours. Never apply ice packs directly on the skin; wrap them in a clean towel.
- Remember to take your Arnica tablets as instructed after surgery. *The bruising and swelling which usually peaks at day 3 or 4 will gradually start to subside after about two weeks, and most of the obvious swelling is gone within three to four weeks.* A slight tinge of bruising can occasionally persist for up to two months but can be easily covered with make up. *Likewise a degree of residual swelling may still be present up to 3 months after surgery.*
- Try and prepare young children (if applicable) in advance so that they do not get frightened by any swelling, bruising or sutures.
- Facelift surgery is not usually very painful, although due to the nature of this procedure you will experience tightness and minor discomfort due to swelling. However if you experience any such pain then you may take one or two pain relieving tablets such as paracetamol as required. **DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN OR PRODUCTS CONTAINING ASPIRIN** as these will prolong or re-commence bleeding. Keep water at your bedside to swallow pills.
- Continue to avoid smoking and alcohol and avoid medications and mixtures mentioned in the DO'S & DON'T section of your information brochure. These tend to recommence or prolong bleeding. Also do not allow anyone to smoke in your presence, either.
- Remember to recommence any regular medication that you take (i.e. blood pressure tablets) as soon as you are able to drink, unless you are specifically requested not to.
- You may wash your hair daily or every other day with a gentle shampoo and conditioner. Try using only lukewarm or tepid water. It will probably be best to have some help with bathing in case you feel light-headed. When drying your hair, dab dry the suture line and remember not to rub it or remove any scabs. They may be softened with a little Vaseline and will separate in time. A hair de-tangler may help get out knots and soften the hair. Be delicate with brushing and set the blow dryer to a warm rather than a hot setting.
- All stitches used in the facelift are of the dissolving type and do not require removal. If you have had eyelid surgery however then you will need to have these removed on day 3or 4.. *The tissues, which may be initially soft, will become*

harder and lumpy over the ensuing weeks before softening again. This is as a result of the inevitable scar build up your body produces to promote healing following surgery. This can sometimes be a difficult period and much patience is called for.

- Your face and sometimes your ears will feel quite numb for some weeks. This is a normal consequence of surgery and should recover after a few months. In the interim however you may also experience sensations of tingling, tightness and hypersensitivity in the face and neck as the nerves begin to grow back. Gentle massage to the face, neck and forehead will be advised at your follow up appointment. This will help soften some of the hardening of the tissues previously described as well as stimulate nerve re-growth to the area. Please do not start local massage until the technique is demonstrated to you at follow up.
- A compression facial garment must be worn continuously for the initial 8 days. It can then be reduced to day or night time only after this period for a further 1-2 weeks. You may apply cool compresses over this. This facilitates swelling and offers support to your incisions whilst healing.
- You may use make up if you wish, after one week.
- It is advisable not to apply any strong hair chemicals (bleach, Ammonia, etc) for 4 weeks following surgery.
- Abstain from exercise, including swimming, for three weeks. Heavier exercise should be delayed for six weeks. You may drive after 3 days.
- Avoid sunlight as much as possible for three months after surgery and then use a high filter sun block (i.e. Factor 30).
- You should not travel abroad until about two weeks after surgery.
- You should get in touch if any of the following occur:
 - 1) Fever greater than 100o F or 38.5o C.
 - 2) Fresh bleeding, other than that of a minor nature.
 - 3) Excessive and sudden swelling.
 - 4) Pain not relieved by two pain relieving tablets.
 - 5) Any discharge from the incision sites after 48 hours.

**REMEMBER IF IN DOUBT, PLEASE ASK BY EITHER CALLING THE
OFFICE 9.30am – 5.30pm MON-FRI ON 0207 4328727
OR OUT OF HOURS IN AN EMERGENCY PLEASE CALL THE PRACTICE
NURSE ON 07944 600 215. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE AND YOUR
CALL WILL BE RETURNED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.**