

Full Face & Neck Lift

Patient Information

Background

As part of the ageing process, skin progressively loses its elasticity, and our muscles tend to slacken. The stresses of daily life, effects of gravity and exposure to sun can be seen on our faces. The folds and smile lines deepen, the corners of the mouth droop, the jaw line sags, and the skin of the neck becomes slack. Around the eyes, the eyebrows droop and the skin of the eyelids gathers in loose folds. In the skin the first sign is fine wrinkles developing around the lips, at the outer corners of the eye and lines of expression. The rate at which this happens varies from one person to another and is determined in part by our genes. Aging of the skin of the face does not necessarily reflect the rate that the rest of our body and mind is ageing and many people feel frustrated that the face they see in the mirror is not the one they feel should be there. Substantial weight loss can produce similar changes in facial appearance to those of the aging process.

What is a full face and neck lift?

A facelift is a surgical operation to tighten and lift the loose skin of your face below the eyes, whilst a neck lift tightens and lifts the skin of the neck.

What are the expected results of the surgery?

A facelift gives the best results if your face and neck have started to sag but your skin still has some elasticity, and your bone structure is strong and well defined. Most people who have facelifts are in their 40s to 60s, but facelifts can be done successfully on people in their 70s or 80s. It should not be obvious that you have had a full face and neck lift, but you should look healthier and more youthful.

Is the procedure right for me?

A detailed consultation with your consultant plastic Surgeon is essential prior to undergoing any surgical procedure. During the consultation, your Surgeon will discuss your area/s of concern, desired improvements, options available (including no treatment at all) and expected outcomes. Your surgeon will examine your face and neck and may take some photographs for your medical records. You will be given a 'cooling-off' period of at least 2 weeks between initial consultation and the date of your operation to ensure you have ample time to reflect on all aspects of the procedure before proceeding (although please bear in mind the waiting lists for our Surgeons mean this period is invariably significantly longer).

How is the procedure carried out?

Should a full face & neck lift be agreed upon as the most suitable treatment, the procedure will be carried out by your Surgeon in our state-of-the-art operating theatre. A facelift involves raising and repositioning the skin and soft tissue of the face. During the operation, cuts are made on both sides of the face in front of the ear, extending up along the hairline, just in front of or behind the cartilage, and around behind the earlobe, into the crease behind the ear and then into the lower scalp. Occasionally, the surgeon may need to make a small cut under the chin for the neck lift part of the surgery. Excess skin is then removed, and the remaining skin is sewn into position. Fat and tissue are redistributed and is sometimes added to the face. The standard facelift helps the lower half of the face, but modifications of the procedure can improve the upper face by lifting the outer angle of the eye and reducing crow's feet (also known as laughter lines).

Aftercare and recovery

The surgery is usually performed as a day case under a general anaesthetic or twilight anaesthesia. Our highly experienced medical team will be on hand during your stay to care for your needs. Following surgery, it is normal for there to be some numbness of the skin of the cheeks and ears. This will usually improve in a few weeks or months, although there may be long-term loss of sensitivity of the skin in front of your ears. It is better to keep your head up to reduce swelling and to sleep with extra pillows to keep your head raised for the first few days after surgery. You will be out of bed on the same day as your surgery and doing light activities after two weeks. It is common for the surgical site/s to ooze a little, this is usually associated with the local anaesthetic discharging but can look a little pink. Swelling at the treatment site should be expected for at least 10 days. At first your face will look a little puffy and may feel rather strange and stiff. The scars can be very well hidden with your hair so that you can return to work and socialising within a couple of weeks. Men find it more difficult than women to disguise the scars, and their beard will grow closer to their ears as a result of the skin being lifted. Camouflage make-up can be helpful in covering bruising. There may be some slight reduction in hair growth in the temples, but this is not usually a problem unless the hair is very thin and several facelifts are carried out. Normally, you will need a couple of weeks off work and will need to avoid vigorous exercise for around six weeks. Light exercise may be recommenced immediately. Showering is permitted on the second post-operative day.

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Scars tend to be quite red in the first 6 weeks, turning to purple over the next 3 months and then fading to white. Most patients will form good quality scars over time.

What to expect after surgery

Facelifts and neck lifts are usually carried under a general anaesthetic (so you would be asleep) or a local anaesthetic (where the whole area is numbed with injections and you might be sedated). The operation takes between two and five hours. You may be given antibiotics to keep the wound clean. You may have drainage tubes in your face or neck to drain away any fluid or blood. These tubes will be taken out when the fluid or blood has stopped draining, usually before you go home. If your surgery is performed as a day case and you go home on the same day, a responsible adult should stay with you for the night. Your face and neck will feel tight and sore. Simple painkillers should be enough to keep you comfortable. Most surgeons use compression garments on your face to reduce bruising and swelling. These will stay on for a few days, and the stitches will be removed after seven or eight days.

Risks and Complications

All surgical procedures are associated with risks. Your Surgeon will explain these in detail during initial consultation, enabling you to reach an informed decision on whether you wish to proceed. Serious complications are uncommon, however patients should be aware of the following complications prior to undergoing a full face and neck lift-

- Permanent damage to the facial nerves – although rare, the risk cannot be discounted
- Anaesthesia risks including allergic reaction, blood clots, heart attack, stroke and death
- Infection
- Healing problems
- Extrusion of deep stitches
- Loss of blood supply to skin
- Change of the colour of skin
- Bleeding, swelling and bruising
- Asymmetry
- Poor scarring of skin
- Increased or reduced sensation
- Damage to deeper structures
- Unsatisfactory results
- Pain, which may persist
- Change over time

- Allergic reaction
- Possibility of revisional surgery

Results

At first your face and neck skin may seem too tight. This usually settles down within six weeks of the operation. Most patients are pleased with the final result, but some find their new shape difficult to get used to. This may happen to you. You cannot judge the final result of your facelift or neck lift for about six to nine months. Even if the operation is a success, you may need another operation in the future to have the skin tightened again.

Cost

Prices for full face and neck lift surgery can vary. Costs may include-

- Anaesthesia fees
- Hospital or surgical facility costs
- Medical tests
- Post-surgery garments
- Prescriptions for medication
- Surgeon's fee

After consultation and if you are planning to proceed with surgery, you will be given a written quotation regarding the cost of the planned procedure.

Alternative treatments

Facelifts and neck lifts are the most effective ways of tightening the skin of your face and neck. They do not get rid of wrinkles around your eyes, forehead and mouth. Other treatments such as Botox injections can help with this. Facelifts and neck lifts do not change the texture and look of your skin, though treatments such as laser resurfacing or chemical peels may help with this. Sometimes, fat grafting or lipofilling can be performed instead of or as well as facelift, to make your face and skin look younger. Sometimes sagging eyebrows can be the main problem. In this case, a brow lift, either on its own or with a facelift or neck lift, may help to tighten the skin on your face.

If you experience any problems or have concerns following surgery, please do not hesitate to call our direct patient line for assistance on 07908 891059.

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Patient Pre & Post-Operative Care Guide

Pre-Operative Preparations

6 week period before surgery-

Patients requiring twilight or general anaesthesia should not travel long haul for the 6 week period before and 6 week period after surgery. Refrain from using any nicotine products including cigarettes, nicotine vapes and chewing gum.

4 weeks before surgery-

Stop taking the contraceptive pill and HRT 4 weeks before surgery if this has been advised by your Surgeon or anaesthetist.

2 weeks before surgery-

We would recommend that you start taking Arnica anti-bruising tablets, three times a day, two weeks prior to and two weeks after surgery. These are available from several health and wellbeing stores, including Holland & Barratt.

1 week before surgery-

Avoid Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Nurofen and other similar painkillers one week before and two weeks after surgery. Paracetamol is the safest painkiller to take, if necessary.

Stop taking Vitamin E and its compounds (such as evening primrose oil, fish oils, garlic and garlic capsules) 1 week before surgery and 2 weeks after surgery. Taking Vitamin E in any form can cause bleeding and post-operative complications.

1 day before and on the day of surgery-

Shower all over (including your hair and face) with Hibiscrub antiseptic liquid soap (provided on prescription from Coppergate Clinic) the day before and morning of your surgery before coming into the clinic. Do not apply moisturiser after showering.

Day of surgery-

You must avoid eating solid food and milky drinks for 6 hours prior to your appointment for sedation. Water, clear drinks, black tea and black coffee can be consumed for up to 2 hours before your sedation/general anaesthetic.

You must take your routine medicines at the usual time, unless advised otherwise and bring them with you (including inhalers).

At least one nail must be free from acrylic or nail polish nails as a monitor will be placed on a finger.

You will be discharged from the clinic wearing a compression garment around your face. If you think that you may feel self-conscious about this, we recommend that you bring a hat or scarf to wear, along with sunglasses.

Post-Operative Instructions

Average length of stay-

The surgery will be performed as a day case under a general anaesthetic or twilight anaesthesia unless your Surgeon advised otherwise during consultation. **If you live further than a 1 hour drive from the clinic, it is mandatory to stay in the vicinity until the following day.**

6 week period after surgery-

Patients requiring twilight or general anaesthesia should not travel long haul for the 6 week period before and 6 week period after surgery.

0-2 weeks after surgery

- It is essential to ensure activity is kept to a minimum and to rest as much as possible
- Wear the provided compression garment day and night, except for when showering
- Wear the provided TED stockings day and night until you are up and about as normal
- Shower if you wish and feel free to wash your hair, but please be as quick as possible and do not linger
- Dressings should be gently patted dry before the compression garment is put back on. At your follow up appointment, your surgeon will guide you on when leisurely showers and baths may resume
- Keep your head up to reduce swelling and sleep with extra pillows to raise your head
- Paracetamol can be taken as required

2 weeks after surgery

- Gentle activity may resume (for example driving) but do listen to your body- it will tell you if you are overdoing things

6-12 weeks after surgery

- Swimming and more strenuous exercise may resume, as advised by your surgeon at your follow up appointment

12 weeks after surgery

- The scar and surrounding skin can be moisturised daily

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