



John Hilinski M.D.  
PLASTIC SURGERY

# GUIDELINES

## FACELIFT / NECK LIFT

### PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

Facelift surgery is performed to improve visible signs of aging in the face and neck. This may include tightening of the underlying muscles, removal of excess skin, and repositioning of soft tissues. In many cases, additional procedures such as neck lift, fat grafting, or eyelid surgery may be performed at the same time. Healing occurs gradually over several weeks to months.

### PROCEDURE-SPECIFIC PREOPERATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- If you color your hair, it is recommended that you do so within 1–2 weeks prior to surgery, as you will not be able to do so again for several weeks after surgery.
- Avoid any skin irritation, sunburn, or inflammation of the face or neck prior to surgery. If this occurs, notify our office.
- Men should plan to shave the day before surgery but not the morning of surgery to avoid skin irritation.

### SUPPLIES

Please obtain the following supplies prior to your surgical date:

- Q-tips
- Hydrogen peroxide (3%)
- A mild antibacterial soap such as Dial
- Vaseline or Aquaphor ointment
- Clean gauze pads

### WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

- At the completion of surgery, your face and neck will be bandaged. These bandages are designed to provide gentle compression and support during early healing. Leave all bandages in place and do not remove or disturb them.
- Mild to moderate swelling and bruising are expected and may extend into the cheeks, neck, and upper chest. A feeling of tightness, numbness, or stiffness is normal.
- Small amounts of oozing or drainage from incision sites may occur during the first 24–48 hours.

### DRAINS

- In some cases, small surgical drains are placed beneath the skin to help remove fluid and prevent accumulation. These drains exit behind the ear or under the chin.



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- Drain output should be emptied and recorded as instructed. This typically involves measuring the amount of fluid and noting the color.
- Drains are usually removed within 1–3 days after surgery.

**INCISION CARE**

- While your dressings are in place, no incision cleaning should be performed.
- Incisions are typically located around the ears, within the hairline, and sometimes under the chin.
- Begin cleaning the incisions only after your dressings have been removed and you have been instructed to do so.

**THE CLEANING PROCESS**

Cleaning should be performed three times per day to remove any dried blood or debris and maintain a clean healing environment. Only one cleaning (typically the morning) should involve diluted hydrogen peroxide.

***Morning***

- Use a diluted hydrogen peroxide solution (mixed 1:1 with water) to gently clean along the incision lines. Do not use full-strength peroxide.
- Use a light rolling motion and limit this step to removing visible debris.
- Dry the area with a clean Q-tip or gauze, then apply a thin layer of ointment as directed.

***Afternoon and Evening***

- Use a mild antibacterial soap mixed with water to gently clean the area. Dry with a clean Q-tip or gauze and apply a thin layer of ointment. Repeat in the evening.

Do not perform cleaning more frequently than instructed, as excessive cleaning—particularly with peroxide—may interfere with proper healing.

**SHOWERING**

- Showering from the shoulders down is permitted 48 hours after surgery, provided you keep all dressings dry.
- Once dressings have been removed (typically around 5–6 days after surgery), you may allow water and mild soap to run gently over the incision sites. Do not scrub or apply direct pressure.
- Pat the area dry carefully and reapply ointment.

**SLEEPING**

- Sleep with your head elevated so that it remains above the level of your heart for at least 1–2 weeks after surgery. You do not need to sleep upright.



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- Avoid lying flat or on your side, and avoid any pressure on the face.
- Using multiple pillows or a wedge pillow may help maintain proper positioning.

**ACTIVITY**

- Avoid strenuous activity, bending, heavy lifting, and any activity that raises your heart rate or blood pressure for at least 4 weeks.
- Light walking is encouraged early in recovery to promote circulation but should not elevate your heart rate.
- Gradually resume normal activity after 4 weeks as tolerated.

**SWELLING AND BRUISING**

- Swelling and bruising are expected and will gradually improve over time.
- Keeping your head elevated and avoiding strenuous activity will help minimize swelling.
- It is normal for swelling to fluctuate and may temporarily increase with activity.

**COLD COMPRESSES**

- Cold compresses may be applied to the cheeks and neck during the first several days after surgery.
- Apply for 20–30 minutes at a time with breaks in between. Do not apply excessive pressure and do not place ice directly on the skin.
- If fat transfer was performed as part of your procedure, do not use cold compresses or icing to the treated areas.

**DIET**

- Start with a soft diet for the first several days after surgery.
- Avoid excessive chewing and avoid hard or crunchy foods initially.
- Maintain good hydration and adequate protein intake to support healing.

**MEDICATIONS AFTER SURGERY**

- Take prescribed pain medication as directed.
- You may transition to acetaminophen as discomfort improves.
- Avoid all restricted medications until cleared by our office.
- Numbness, tightness, and altered sensation are normal and will improve gradually over time.

**HAIR CARE**

- Hair may be gently washed after surgery once cleared, typically within a few days.
- Use a mild shampoo and avoid aggressive scrubbing near incision sites.



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- Avoid hair dryers on high heat and avoid chemical treatments (coloring, perming) for several weeks.

**AVOIDING TRAUMA**

- Avoid any manipulation or pressure on the face and neck during the healing process.
- Do not pull on the skin, massage incisions, or apply external pressure unless instructed.
- Be cautious when dressing; use clothing that does not need to be pulled over the head.

**SUN EXPOSURE**

- Avoid direct sun exposure to incision sites for several weeks.
- Use sunscreen and protective measures such as hats when outdoors.

**HEALING TIMELINE**

- Initial healing occurs over the first several weeks.
- Most patients are socially presentable within 2–3 weeks.
- Swelling continues to improve over several months, with final results developing gradually over time.

**FOLLOW-UP**

- Your first postoperative visit is typically within 1–3 days after surgery for drain removal and evaluation.
- Additional follow-up visits will be scheduled as needed.

**WHEN TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE**

Contact our office if you experience significant swelling on one side, expanding bruising, persistent bleeding, fever greater than 101°F, severe pain, or any concerns regarding your healing.