



John Hilinski M.D.
PLASTIC SURGERY

GUIDELINES

LIP LIFT SURGERY

PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

A lip lift is performed to shorten the distance between the base of the nose and the upper lip, increase upper tooth show, and create a more defined upper lip shape. The procedure typically involves removal of a small segment of skin beneath the nose with closure placed in the natural crease at the base of the nostrils. Healing occurs gradually over several weeks, and the scar continues to mature over several months upwards of one full year.

PROCEDURE-SPECIFIC PREOPERATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoid waxing, threading, bleaching, laser hair removal, or other irritating treatments to the upper lip for at least 1–2 weeks prior to surgery.
- Avoid sunburn, active acne breakouts, irritation, or any skin infection near the nose or upper lip prior to surgery. If this occurs, notify our office.
- If you routinely remove upper lip hair, do so several days before surgery rather than immediately before the procedure to avoid skin irritation.
- Men should shave the day before surgery if needed, but not the morning of surgery.

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, the incision beneath the nose will typically be coated with ointment. In some cases, small tapes may be present.
- Mild to moderate swelling of the upper lip is expected and is often most noticeable during the first several days after surgery.
- Bruising may occur around the upper lip, lower nose, and sometimes into the cheeks.
- Tightness of the upper lip and a sensation of limited lip movement are normal early in healing.
- Smiling, laughing, and lip movement may feel restricted at first.
- Temporary difficulty fully moving the upper lip is expected and improves as swelling subsides.
- Small spots of oozing or crusting along the incision may occur during the first 24–48 hours.



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DRESSINGS / DEVICES

- There is usually no bulky dressing after a lip lift.
- If small tapes are present, leave them in place unless instructed otherwise.
- Keep the incision clean, protected, and lightly coated with ointment.

INCISION OR WOUND CARE

Begin cleaning the incision the day after surgery unless otherwise instructed. Cleaning should be performed three times per day to remove any dried blood or debris and maintain a clean healing environment.

Morning

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

Afternoon and Evening

- Use a mild antibacterial soap mixed with water to gently clean the incision. Dry the area carefully and apply a thin layer of ointment. Repeat in the evening.
- Continue this routine until the incision has sealed well and crusting has resolved, typically about 7–10 days unless otherwise directed.
- Keep the incision continuously moisturized with a thin layer of ointment during the early healing period. Do not pick at scabs or crusting.
- Once the skin is fully closed, scar care may be started if recommended by our office.

PROCEDURE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY / RESTRICTIONS

- Avoid excessive lip movement for the first 1–2 weeks. This includes forceful smiling, exaggerated facial expressions, puckering, whistling, and opening the mouth very wide.
- Avoid straws, smoking motions, and any repetitive pursing of the lips during early healing.
- Eat smaller bites and avoid foods that require aggressive mouth opening during the first 1–2 weeks.
- Avoid strenuous exercise, bending, heavy lifting, and activities that raise heart rate or blood pressure for approximately 2 weeks.
- Avoid any trauma or pressure to the upper lip and base of the nose while healing.
- Be cautious when brushing teeth and washing the face to avoid tension on the incision.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Swelling may make the upper lip appear tighter, fuller, or slightly uneven early on. This is normal and improves with time.



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- The scar is placed at the base of the nose but will be visible early in healing. It commonly appears pink or firm at first and gradually softens and fades.
- Temporary numbness, tingling, firmness, or sensitivity of the upper lip and incision area may occur.
- Upper teeth may show more than expected initially because of swelling and stiffness; this typically settles as healing progresses.
- Do not apply makeup directly over the incision until the skin is fully sealed and you have been cleared to do so.
- Avoid sun exposure to the scar and use strict sun protection once healing allows, as sun exposure can worsen scar discoloration.

HEALING TIMELINE

- **First 48 hours:** Swelling, tightness, mild oozing, and discomfort are most common.
- **Days 3–7:** Swelling and bruising are often at their peak, then begin to improve. The incision may look more noticeable during this period.
- **Week 1:** Sutures are often removed around this time, depending on healing.
- **Weeks 2–3:** Most visible bruising and a significant portion of swelling improve. Lip movement begins to feel more natural.
- **Weeks 4–6:** The incision continues to soften. Residual swelling and tightness continue to improve.
- **Months 3–12:** Scar maturation continues, with gradual fading and softening over time.

FOLLOW-UP

- Your first postoperative visit is typically within the first several days to 1 week after surgery.
- Additional follow-up visits will occur to monitor incision healing, remove sutures if needed, and assess scar maturation.

WHEN TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE

Contact our office if you experience severe pain, significant asymmetrical swelling, worsening redness, fever greater than 101°F, vision changes, or any concerns regarding healing.