

Facelift

A facelift is an operation designed to improve certain features in the lower 2/3rds of the face caused by the ageing process. The modern facelift produces a rejuvenated, fresher, less tired looking you without creating the plastic made-up appearance! It sets the clock back some 5-10 years, but does not stop it.

What are the changes that occur to an ageing face?

The face undergoes changes due to gravity, changes due to use of muscles of facial expression, changes due to skin damage and a generalised loss of elasticity and fat under the skin and in certain areas. These changes in the lower 2/3rds of the face result in development of jowls, deepening of the nasolabial crease (smile lines), a general skin excess, fine lines on the lips, drooping of the angles of the mouth and varying degrees of hollowing out in certain areas. Smoking does not only hasten these changes but puts an individual at a much greater risk of complications.

What does it improve?

A facelift improves the Jowl and removes skin excess, giving a fresher, smoother more youthful appearance. In addition it improves the drooping of the angles of the mouth and the deep nasolabial creases thereby improving the 'tired sad look'.

What it does not improve?

If performed alone, a facelift does not improve the upper third of the face, the eyes, the neck, the fine lines of facial expression especially around the lips and skin damage arising from sun exposure and acne etc.

I therefore frequently combine a facelift with other procedures around the face to give you the best aesthetic results and rejuvenation. Some of these procedures include :- Necklift to correct fullness, neck bands and loss of definition between the chin and the neck, Eyelid reduction surgery (blepharoplasty), Surgery to improve droopy eyebrows and frown lines (endoscopic browlift), Temporary or permanent fillers like fat transfer to the nasolabial crease and other areas and chemical peels or laser skin treatment to improve skin damage. I will discuss with you the benefit of any additional procedure in your specific situation.

What does it involve?

I perform a facelift under a general anaesthetic, it takes about 3- 4 hours and 1-2 days stay in hospital.

The incision is mostly hidden in the hairline, in front of the ear and behind the ear. I then raise the skin flaps carefully and tighten the 'muscle' layer. There are different methods of doing this. Excess skin is then excised and drains inserted and the skin stitched with non-absorbable sutures. I also perform liposuction to the chin area in most individuals.

These notes are intended to be used with your consultation

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What do you expect afterwards?

The drains will usually be removed after about 24 hours. The sutures in front of the ear are removed after 6 days and those within the hair and behind the ear after 10 days.

You may have discomfort but not significant pain.

There is initial tightness, swelling and bruising. These occur to different degrees in different people

It is important to sleep propped up with pillows, to avoid bending and straining and to take things really easy for the first week. I also advice you avoid strenuous activity for 4-6 weeks. All of these will help reduce swelling and bruising.

You can wash your hair the next day and use makeup after 3 days making sure to avoid the suture lines in the first week. The face should be presentable socially in 2-4 weeks usually depending on your amount of bruising and you should be leading your normal life again in 4-6 weeks.

What are the possible complications?

Blood accumulation(haematoma) under the skin after the operation is the commonest complication, but occurs in less than 3% of patients. Small haematomas may be treated with needle aspiration whereas large haematomas require a return to theatre for drainage. 'Blood thinning' medication like aspirin increase this risk and would need to be stopped for at least six weeks before the operation.

Skin flap necrosis. There is a much higher risk of this in smokers and I would not proceed with a facelift until an individual stops smoking for six weeks.

Injury to the facial nerve is uncommon. It may involve one of its branches resulting in a partial paralysis of the face. Infection is also uncommon but can occur.

Asymmetry- it is interesting that a mild asymmetry of the two sides of the face exists in all individuals and a facelift may not correct this. Obvious asymmetry will however be adjusted.

Scars settle well after facelifts but occasionally they may be problematic.

There may be change or loss of feeling in the area in front of the ears. This should improve with time but may be permanent.

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