

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACELIFT SURGERY

Dr. David Mueller

We are delighted that you have chosen our practice for your facelift procedure. A facelift is one of the most dramatic procedures for looking younger. So that we can maximize the positive changes associated with facelift procedures, we ask that you pay very close attention to the recovery process.

ACTIVITY: For the first 24 hours, bed rest is absolutely necessary. Elevate the head with several pillows and talk as little as possible. Do not sleep on the side of your face but rather with the back of your head on the pillow for two weeks. An airline type pillow is also fine as long as the head is elevated.

DRESSINGS: Dr. Mueller will place a light dressing that will remain in place for 24 hours. Do not remove the dressing, as Dr. Mueller will remove it the following day.

For the first week, put an antibiotic ointment (Polysporin, Neosporin, Bacitracin) around the ear incisions. This will keep the incisions moist and avoid scabs from forming. Make sure you are cleaning behind the ears and have your caregiver look behind your ears to double check. Do not scrub with a washcloth or your hands, but you may use hydrogen peroxide to break up the scabs or crusts behind the ear and reapply antibiotic ointment.

You may shower after 48 hours, gently washing the hair with a mild shampoo. Use a good conditioner to rid the hair of tangles. Your hair will likely be more tangled than usual due to small blood clots in the hair. You may also see some hair come out in the shower. This is not hair loss, but hair that was cut during your procedure. You may carefully brush and blow-dry your hair using low heat only, as your scalp may be numb in certain areas and can therefore be burned if high heat is used. Staples are often used in the hair line behind the ear, so be careful not to catch them with your brush. Hair coloring and permanents may not be used for three weeks following removal of sutures and staples.

HOW I LOOK AND FEEL: Patients that undergo facelift procedures are likely to swell and bruise. Swelling may last for several days, while bruising may be present for a week or more. If a dressing was placed, this will prevent swelling in some areas, while the front of your face may be swollen. This will go down quickly after the dressing is removed. Most people need someone to assist them at least for the first night following their surgery, so it is imperative to arrange for a care-giver for a day or two at the minimum.

Some patients bruise immediately and can have noticeable bruising on the neck as well as around the eyes and mouth. This bruising may begin as purple and will fade to yellow and disappear. The sides of the neck may swell immediately after surgery and may appear distorted. This will resolve without problem in several days.

For the first week after facelift surgery, your face and neck will feel very tight. This is completely normal. It may also be difficult to open your mouth for several days. Do not force head turning or mouth opening, as this may tear stitches. Avoid extreme movements of the face, neck and mouth.

Numbness is very common following facelift procedures and will resolve naturally over the upcoming weeks. Permanent numbness is very rare.

POSTOPERATIVE OFFICE VISITS: Our staff will schedule your first visit for 24 hours following your facelift. Your second visit will be in 7 days, followed by a third visit the following week to remove the remainder of your stitches and staples. Dr. Mueller will then want to see you again two to three weeks later, then as needed. Please bring a big scarf or hat to your first post-op visit, as you will be having a bad hair day!

DRIVING: This should not be resumed until it is comfortable to move the head about without any restrictions from discomfort or swelling.

EXERCISE: During the first postoperative week, activity should be kept to a minimum. There should be no strenuous activity this first week as this may increase facial swelling and compromise the final result. Over the following two weeks, activity may be gradually increased. Walking is a superb way of getting exercise without jeopardizing the healing process. You should absolutely not perform exercises that require severe turning of the head such as golf, rowing and aerobics for four weeks following surgery. These extreme exercises can stretch and tear the sutures that are supporting your lift. After 4 to 6 weeks, the areas are fully healed and you may resume normal activity. Judgment however must be used, as all patients do not heal alike.

SCARS: Facelift scars generally heal in an excellent manner but they look worse before they look better. In other words, your wounds will go through multiple stages of healing and at times look better or worse. Dr. Mueller takes big steps to place the scars in the most hidden areas and spends a lot of time using plastic closure techniques to ensure the best scars. Most of the time they heal adequately by themselves, but occasionally, Dr. Mueller will perform minor revision or laser of the scars to improve their appearance.

If any part of your convalescence is confusing, please call the office at 757-496-8066. Dr. Mueller is available 24 hours a day by cell phone at 757-406-7400.