

**POSTOPERATIVE CARE-OUTPATIENT SURGERY
RHYTIDECTOMY
(FACE LIFT)**

▪ **Your first 24 hours**

Someone should stay overnight with you.

▪ **Position**

Keeping your head elevated at least 45 degrees for 10-14 days after surgery will help reduce postoperative swelling. If you can, sleep on a recliner. Also, we want you to avoid pivoting your head for 7 days. Instead, turn your head and shoulders together as a whole.

▪ **Dressings**

Keep your dressings as clean as possible. Do not remove them unless instructed to do so.

▪ **Drains**

On each side of your face, a small drain may be placed under the skin and brought out through a small incision made in the temple. These drains evacuate the fluid that accumulates after surgery and enable you to heal faster. When the drain is first put in place, the bulb at the end of each tube will be compressed to create gentle suction. As the fluid collects in the bulb, it will expand.

The drains are removed the day after surgery. Occasionally they are left for 2-3 days. Removing them feels a little strange, but is not painful.

▪ **Sutures**

The sutures in front of your ears will be removed 4-6 days after surgery. If you have had an incision made under your chin, those sutures also will be removed 4-6 days after surgery. The staples within the hair and the sutures behind the ear are removed 7-10 days after surgery. Apply ointment to suture lines in front of ears 2-3 times daily until all sutures are removed. You may clean all suture lines to remove dried blood using a moistened Q-tip.

▪ **Swelling**

Expect some discomfort. This should be relieved by your pain medication.

▪ **Ice Packs**

Ice packs can be helpful with both swelling and discomfort. The swelling and bruises will go away within several weeks. Ice packs will help the discomfort and swelling.

▪ **Showering and Bathing**

You may take a “sponge bath” the day after surgery until directed differently by the physician. .

▪ **Hair Care**

After a facelift, most patients experience a temporary change in the texture and manageability of their hair. Your hair is reacting to the “shock” of surgery and will recover naturally within 6 weeks. If you color or perm your hair, plan to have it done before surgery or wait 6 weeks afterward for the best results. Your hair will be a little “lifeless” during that period of time. Also, be gentle when combing your hair.

- **Shampoo**

Forty-eight hours after surgery or 24 hours after the drains have been removed; you may wash your hair. You may prefer to have your hairdresser wash it for you. In either case, a hair dryer, is used at all, should be kept on the lowest heat setting, as your scalp may be partially numb.

- **Activities**

We want you to avoid straining or any aerobic activity for at least 3 weeks after surgery. This is to avoid bleeding, bruising, and swelling. Do not resume strenuous exercise for 4 to 6 weeks. The physician will give you clearance to increase your activities according to the progress of your recovery.

- **Driving**

You may resume driving 7-10 days after surgery. Keep in mind that you must have full use of your reflexes. If pain will inhibit them, don't drive.

- **Sexual Activity**

You may enjoy sexual activity as your body allows with certain restrictions.

- **Exposure to Sunlight**

If fresh scars are exposed to the sun, they will tend to become darker and take longer to fade. Sunscreen can help. Take extra care and precautions if the area operated on is slightly numb---you might not "feel" sunburn developing.

- **Skin Care**

All skin on the face and neck may feel dry and chapped after facial surgery. We recommend that you make frequent and liberal use of a good moisturizer without fragrances in it.

- **Diet**

If you have any postoperative nausea, carbonated sodas and dry crackers may settle the stomach. If nausea is severe, let us know as soon as possible. If you feel normal, start with liquids and bland foods, and if those are well tolerated, progress to a regular diet.

- **Smoking**

Smoking reduces capillary flow in your skin. We advise you not to smoke at all during the first 15 days after surgery.

- **Alcohol**

Alcohol dilates the blood vessels and could increase postoperative bleeding. Please do not drink until you have stopped taking the prescription pain pills, as the combination of pain pills and alcohol can be dangerous.

- **Returning To Work**

The average person usually returns to work or to a social schedule in 2-3 weeks. However, there is considerable variation in healing and occasionally a full month is required.

- **Post Operative Appointments**

It is very important that you follow the schedule of appointments we establish after surgery.

- **Finally**

If you have excessive bleeding or pain, call the office at 859-254-5665, day or night.