

## As You Heal

### *Rhytidectomy (Face lift)/Neck Lift*

- **Numbness:** When the skin is separated from the underlying tissues during surgery, small sensory nerves are cut. Varying degrees of numbness will be present after surgery and will improve gradually as the nerves reconnect to the skin. This process can take from two months for face, neck, and cheeks to nine to twelve months for the forehead and scalp.
- **Tightness:** Frequently there is a tight feeling in the neck after a face-lift. During surgery, not only the skin, but also the underlying muscles are tightened to create a better and longer lasting result. Additionally, the swelling will move downward in the first week and the neck will feel even tighter. Do not be alarmed! You will not choke and the sensation will decrease during the first month.
- **Healing of Sensory Nerves:** As the nerves regenerate, itching, burning, tingling and shooting sensations will occur. Ice, moisturizers and gentle massaging are helpful during this phase of the healing process.
- **Firmness Under Skin:** Some degree of firmness or lumpiness under the skin is normal after surgery and will resolve with time. Local massage will speed resolution of this problem, which normally takes two to four months to disappear completely.
- **Asymmetric Swelling:** Do not be alarmed if one side of your face is slightly more swollen or numb than the other. This is common and usually disappears within a few weeks.
- **Eye Symptoms:** Your eyelids may feel tight even if they have not been operated on because of the swelling that occurs in the entire face. Your vision may also be blurred from the ointment that is placed in them for protection during surgery. Eye drops and ice packs will feel particularly soothing for the first few days after surgery.
- **Activities:** Most patients who have had a facelift feel reasonably normal within three to four days after surgery even though they are swollen. If you wish to do light office work, you may. Do not, however, do any heavy activities or aerobic exercise for at least three weeks after surgery! Strenuous activities can cause bleeding and swelling for a longer period than is necessary.

### **General Post Facelift Guidelines:**

You must have someone available to drive you home from the surgery center and remain with you for the first night following surgery. If you live further than 30 miles away from the surgery center, we ask that you stay locally for the first night. There are post-operative care facilities close by if interested. Please ask our office for numbers if you need assistance.

If there is no overnight stay you should return home and go directly to bed for 24 hours, with bathroom privileges only. Take the pain medication every three to four hours, if needed. Ideally, it should be taken with food to prevent nausea. Take the antibiotic every eight hours for three days.

Upon leaving the surgery center, you may have small quantities of liquids as desired and tolerated. The following day you may progress to a soft diet. After the above, you may eat as desired. NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES are allowed for one week after surgery and especially while taking the medications.

**It is a good idea to record when medications are taken to avoid taking too much or not enough. KEEP A RECORD! We have provided a medication log .**

Sleeping on your back will be the most comfortable position and will help to keep the swelling down. Use a pillow under your neck as a neck roll to elevate your chin. Keep your chin up at all times.

You will have a large cotton bandage on your head for about one to three days. This helps protect and cushion the surgical sites and also keeps mild pressure on the suture lines.

You can expect some swelling and bruising, sometimes unevenly. Rarely are the two sides of the face the same at any time during the first few days after surgery. Each side heals at a different rate, but rest assured the swelling and bruising will subside gradually after the first week. You may have some numbness in the ears and jaw areas. This is normal and feeling will return gradually over 6-12 months.

You will be told when you may shower and wash your hair.

Social activities should be restricted for 10-14 days after surgery. Excessive exercise and contact sports should be avoided for three weeks. Do not swim or fly until told you may do so.

Please call us with any concerns Monday-Friday 8:30am-5:00pm. Weekdays after 5 pm and weekends you will reach our answering service and will be directed to Dr. Brown if it is an emergency. Our office number is 480-947-2455.