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MELOPLASTY & RHYTIDECTOMY (Face Lift)

Face lift is a surgical procedure for enhancing the cheeks, lower face and neck. The procedure uses an incision passing from the sideburn region to the front of the ear and extending behind the ear into the hair bearing scalp and a scar beneath the chin. The desired result is to produce a pleasing smooth contour to the face, cheeks and neck and at the same time, excise excess skin. The result improves sagging skin and jowls and tightens the skin of the neck.

Ageing causes the skin and muscles around the cheeks and neck to loosen producing lax skin and wrinkles, along with diminished soft tissue volume over the cheekbones and lower eyelids. Relaxation of underlying tissues around the face causes the underlying fat to push downward, resulting in a puffy, droopy appearance. Both skin and muscles are lifted in a face lift procedure.

Your appearance after a face lift will be influenced by your general state of health, the condition of the skin of your face, age, weight and other factors. Each patient is unique and during your consultation, how these general factors apply to you in particular, will be discussed.

Quality of skin

Good skin is a desirable attribute in all patients. The loose skin of the face can usually be tightened, giving a more pleasing appearance. Jowls and drooping areas are lifted back to a more youthful position higher on the cheeks.

If you have any chronic skin problems, diabetes or other medical problems you may need evaluation by an appropriate doctor prior to surgery.

Permanency of results

Most patients have good long-term results with this surgery. Surgery will change your face to an earlier, more youthful appearance. You will still age at your normal rate and therefore will continue to sag and wrinkle, but you will always have some improvement in appearance.

Scars

All attempts to minimise and hide your scars will be made. Scars are placed where they are least conspicuous or easily hidden. In most patients the scars will be red or pigmented for 1 to 2 months and gradually fade thereafter until they are not noticeable by 4 to 6 months after surgery. The scars are rarely troublesome. Nevertheless, you should know that all scars are permanent and their width and final colour are not totally predictable. Any previous scar hypertrophy (widening and thickening) that you have may reflect on your final scar.

Anaesthesia

General anaesthesia is always employed. You should not require a blood transfusion.

Duration of the operation

The operation usually lasts 3 to 7 hours, depending on the procedure used.



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After surgery

You will have a large and fluffy bandage placed after surgery. This is kept in place for the first 24 hours. There will be a drainage tube under the bandages. These will be removed at the first dressing change in hospital. A smaller and more manageable face form garment will be applied thereafter; this will be supplied by the hospital. You will be required to wear this garment full time for the first 2 weeks following surgery.

Ice packs applied to the face and neck help to minimise the swelling postoperatively for the first 2 to 3 days. Sutures are removed 5 to 7 days after surgery. You may shower as normal after the first 24 hours.

Pain medication will be prescribed. There is usually mild discomfort after surgery, which will be controlled by your medication. You will be seen around 5 days after surgery and then at 2 weeks and 6 weeks after surgery, although you may return earlier. Vigorous sports are discouraged for 5 to 7 weeks.

Recovery

For the first 2 weeks following surgery the treated areas will be swollen, bruised and possibly appear distorted. After this, the swelling associated with the surgery begins to subside. Resolution of the swelling will continue but your final outcome may not be apparent until 3 to 6 months after surgery.

Cover up cosmetics or makeup to camouflage bruising may be worn after 14 days. Sensation of the lifted skin areas will initially be diminished or absent, but will return over the following months. Return to work or social activities may be possible at 2-4 weeks depending on your healing. However, the scars, though hidden, will be pink for the first 1 to 2 months.

Photographs

Pre-operative photographs will be taken. They aid in planning and performing surgery and become a permanent part of your patient records. Intra-operative photographs may be taken during your surgery if we are required to do so by Medicare. Post-operative photographs are also taken. Permission to show these photographs to other patients seeking the same type of surgery will be sought, but there is no pressure for you to provide it. Your photographs will not be shown to other patients unless you approve of this.

Complications and untoward results

Although rare, serious complications can occur with this kind of surgery. You may have bruising that lasts longer than the usual 2 to 3 weeks and it can occasionally be up to months. As with any surgery, bleeding, infection and other complications are possible. Bleeding in the face can occur which may require emergency decompression. Nerve damage, causing weakness in the face or numbness in the ear, face or scalp can occur. Hair loss from the suture line or skin loss can occur due to unexpected bleeding or swelling, though this is rare.

Should you not understand any of the foregoing, or should you want further information, please ask. Occasionally questions will arise after you have left your consultation. Feel free to call for additional information. If necessary, additional consultation visits can be scheduled. Find out all you need to know. It is our desire that all patients are fully informed.

This information included in this sheet is general information only. Please contact the surgery on (08) 9380 0333 or alternative phone numbers as shown on your appointment card if you have any concerns regarding your post-operative recovery.