

Why have a facelift?

If the signs of aging in your face is starting to concern you, or you may be self-conscious about a feature such as a receding chin which makes your face look unbalanced, or it could be that Mother Nature simply didn't give you quite what you wanted - a facelift may be the answer for you. Technically this is known as rhytidectomy, a facelift is a surgical procedure to improve visible signs of aging in the face and neck. Surgery can dramatically rejuvenate your appearance, giving your face a freshness that makes you look several years younger.

The Procedure

Although the procedure is completed under a general anaesthetic a Local anaesthetic is also inserted with adrenaline in order to minimise any bleeding and to help the surgeon define where to make the incision.

A continuous incision is made running from the temple downwards, hugging the contours at the front of the ear, around the earlobe to travel up behind the ear in its natural crease, then along the hairline. In men, the incision in front of the ear hugs the back of the sideburn in order to prevent pulling the sideburn hair on to the front of the ear when the skin is redraped.

The skin is then carefully lifted off the underlying muscle up to an imaginary line and drawn down from the corner of the eye. The flap will not be made any bigger than this as there would be a chance that the blood supply could not support the raised skin.

After the skin is raised, the underlying tissue is gently pulled up and stitched into place in order to give better form to the face and jaw line once the skin is laid back down. This is carried out in both the face and upper neck. Additional liposuction under the chin may be necessary.

The skin flaps are now laid back down with the excess skin being trimmed off to reduce any previous laxity. The surgeon will be careful not to remove too much skin as this would give a tight, "windswept" look. It is also vital that there is no tension around the earlobe as this may result in it being pulled down to give a "pixie-like" appearance.

The skin is then held in place by both absorbable stitches under the skin and non-absorbable stitches at the skin edges. A small vacuum drain is inserted behind the ear in order to remove any blood underneath the flaps and to suck the flaps down on to the underlying tissue.

After the operation

Antibiotic cream is placed over all of the incisions followed by gauze dressings and a gauze bandage. The following day, the bandages are removed to check the wounds and the drains are removed.

A lighter dressing is then applied, to be removed the next day at home. The stitches are then removed a week after surgery. Male patients can begin shaving after one week and are advised to use an electric razor which is generally less abrasive. The patient will have further follow-up appointments 1 month, 6 months and a year after the surgery.

General aftercare

Aftercare of the "lifted" face makes the difference between a good and excellent result. Simple measures such as regular use of moisturisers, plenty of fluid intake and avoidance of sun exposure for six months is certainly a help. Another useful tip is to sleep with the head on two or three pillows for as long as possible afterwards in order to minimise blood flow and thus swelling to the face.