



## Rhytidectomy – Facelift & Necklift

The convalescence period varies. The more extensive the surgery, the longer the convalescence, but the more impressive, natural, and longer lasting the results may be. Please ask, if not certain, what level of rhytidectomy has been planned for yourself, different maneuvers are often selected to fit the individual anatomy or to minimize recovery. Although most bruising disappears in just a couple or more weeks, residual swelling may last for a more extended time, maybe even 8-12 weeks. Your appearance is generally presentable in 3 weeks, though subtle surgical stigmata may persist for 4-6 weeks, usually camouflaged. Baseline healing is generally achieved at around 3 months, though soft tissue modeling can take up to 6 months or more, with subtle changes in this time frame.

### What to expect

- The entire face will be swollen for 2-3 weeks but will start resolving as soon as 48 hours after surgery. Swelling will usually be symmetric over the face but can appear irregular.
  - There can be changes or resurgence in swelling or tenderness after several months. Please recognize that healing is not yet complete, and thus the final appearance has not yet been achieved.
- Bruising may be distributed throughout the face and lasts 1-3 weeks. The color may be purple, green, or yellow.
- Numbness is customary around the ears and under the chin; feeling will come back slowly over several months.
- Dimpling of the cheeks sometimes occurs but disappears within 2-3 weeks.
- The most sensitive areas are normally the cheekbones and around the ears, but you may also experience tightness in the neck or cheek. Pain around the ears, especially with pressure, may persist for several weeks.
- A feeling of tightness behind the ears and upper neck will last for several days. Areas that are undergoing healing, especially in the neck, may feel firm for several weeks. They will eventually soften over time. The tightness peaks during the 3rd week.
- You will likely have drains placed under the skin (which are removed the day after surgery) as well as a compression head dressing. The drains are secured but avoid pulling on them. The bulbs connected to the ends of the drains should be kept compressed at all times.

### Activities

- Normal activity can be gradually resumed as tolerated after 3 weeks but strenuous activities should be avoided for another week. Gentle movement and sensible return to activities should not disrupt anything since the surgical sites have been reinforced to support throughout the convalescent period.
- Surgical sites may feel a bit stiff for a few days following surgery. Avoid straining or turning your head to either side as this will pull on the stitch lines. To turn, move your head and shoulders as a unit together.
- Facial movements (smiling, talking, chewing, yawning, etc.) should be kept to a minimum for the 1<sup>st</sup> week.
- Keep your head elevated when resting for 4-5 days after surgery to minimize swelling.
- Smoking is known to delay healing since the blood supply to the skin is reduced. To minimize possible complications (such as skin loss and scarring), refrain from using tobacco 10 days before and 3 weeks after surgery. Nicotine alternatives (patches or gum) still release the harmful vasoconstrictor and cannot be used.





# Post Operative Instructions

## Medications

- You will be given pain medication to take only if you need it. Do not take them more often than instructed, and do not take them if you do not feel pain. These pills contain a mild narcotic that may make you lightheaded or even nauseated. We would prefer that you take 3-4 over the counter 200mg ibuprofen tablets every 6-8 hours if this controls your discomfort. You may also alternate with ibuprofen and prescribed pain medication every 3-4 hours if you need more pain control.
- You may be given antibiotic pills to take. If you are given them, please take them as instructed, as they are important for proper healing. Take them until they are completely gone.
- You may be given prednisone (steroids) to take for a week. This is to help reduce swelling and discomfort. Please take them exactly as the instructions are written.
- It is not unusual to have some nausea following surgery. This can be an anesthetic or medication related. Most will fade within 6-8 hours after surgery. You may be given nausea medication (Zofran) to take after surgery. Please take if needed exactly as prescribed.
- Please resume taking all your normal medications the day after surgery.

## Wound Care

- After your dressings and drains have been removed, you may start cleaning along the incision lines (in front and behind the ears, and possibly under the chin) with half strength hydrogen peroxide (diluted with water) twice daily. Apply a thin layer of Aquaphor or bacitracin ointment to these areas after cleaning.
- You will be given a reusable compression head dressing that we encourage you to wear as much as possible to reduce swelling. You may also apply ice in intervals (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) to the exposed areas of your face for the first 72 hours to reduce swelling post-operatively.
- Makeup may be worn on the face immediately, but do not use on incision sites until they heal (usually 2 weeks).
- The skin of your face and incision sites are sensitive to sunlight after surgery. For at least 6 months, protect yourself from excessive sun exposure with a wide brim hat and sunscreen with zinc oxide of SPF 30 or greater.

## Visits to Our Office

- All follow up appointment dates and times are detailed in the packet that was mailed out to you prior to surgery when booking.
- You will have a follow up appointment the day after your surgery. We will remove the postoperative dressing and the JP drains. We will also wash your hair and re-wrap you.
- The sutures will be removed at a follow up appointment about 1 week after surgery.

If you have any questions or concerns following your surgery do not hesitate to contact our office at **804-484-3739**.

Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If you need to reach us after these office hours, please call Virginia ENT's main line at **(804) 484-3700**.