

# C R A I G

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## FACIAL PLASTIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY OTOLARYNGOLOGY

### POST-OPERATIVE FACE LIFT INFORMATION

The following should answer questions regarding the "do's" and "don'ts" following your surgery. You and your family should read this information several times so that you may become thoroughly familiar with it; doing so will help provide a smooth post-operative period for you.

#### *SWELLING*

Every operation, no matter how minor, is accompanied by swelling of the surrounding tissues. This amount varies from person to person, but always seems more in the face since there is looseness of the tissues and because even a small amount makes the features appear distorted. Sometimes the swelling is greater the second day after surgery. It may be more pronounced along the jaw line and is generally worse when you first arise in the morning.

The main thing to remember is that such swelling eventually subsides; you can help in several ways:

- 1) **STAY UP** (sitting, standing, walking around) as much as possible on your first post-operative day. **IMPORTANT!** Of course, you should rest when you tire.
- 2) **ICE COMPRESSES** are used continuously for the first 24 hours after your facial dressings have been removed. Use wash towels (not an ice bag) dipped in ice water applied across the jaw and neck. They may be placed in a plastic bag to avoid wetting any dressing or clothing. After the initial 24-hour period, you may use the compresses for twenty minutes at a time, several times daily to help reduce any swelling or discomfort.
- 3) **AVOID TURNING YOUR HEAD** or bending the neck. When you must turn, move your shoulders and head as one unit or as though you had a "stiff neck". Do this for 2 weeks.
- 4) **AVOID BENDING OVER OR LIFTING** heavy things for one week. Besides aggravating swelling, this may raise your blood pressure and start hemorrhage.
- 5) **AVOID HITTING OR BUMPING YOUR FACE AND NECK** It is wise not to pick up small children and you should sleep alone for one week after your surgery.
- 6) **SLEEP WITH THE HEAD OF YOUR BED ELEVATED** for 1-2 weeks after surgery. The use of two to three pillows under your mattress and one or two on top. It is also necessary for you to sleep on your back with head straight for 30 days.
- 7) **AVOID EXCESSIVE SUNNING** of the face for one month; ordinary exposure is not harmful.

#### *DISCOLORATION*

It is not unusual to have varied amounts of discoloration of your face and neck. Like the swelling, it may become more pronounced, especially in the neck, after the first day or so, but remember this is temporary.

***PAIN***

If you should have discomfort around the face, use the ice compresses along with the pain medication prescribed for you. Under no circumstances should you take aspirin or medications containing aspirin or salicylates, this also means Ibuprofen (Advil, Aleve, etc.) You may take Tylenol or Extra-Strength Tylenol.

***WEAKNESS***

It is not unusual after a person has an anesthetic or any type of operation for them to feel weak, have palpitations, break out in "cold sweats," or get dizzy. This gradually clears up in a few days without medication.

***DEPRESSION***

It is not unusual for an individual to go through a period of mild depression after cosmetic surgery. No matter how much they wanted the surgery beforehand or how much they were told about what to expect post-operatively, they are shocked when they see their face swollen and, perhaps, discolored. Please realize this condition is temporary and will subside. The best "treatment" consists of busying one's self with the details of post-operative care and trying to divert one's attention to other thoughts.

***DIET***

Immediately following surgery, you are encouraged to take a moderate amount of liquids to avoid dehydration. It is also best to avoid foods that require vigorous chewing for several days. As always, a well balanced diet in moderation is recommended for those interested in maintaining their best physical condition. Alcoholic beverages are discouraged during the first three weeks after surgery. A social drink would be acceptable.

***NUMBNESS***

Parts of the face, neck, and ears sometimes feel weak or "numb" after a face lift operation, but this is usually temporary.

***TIGHTNESS OF THE FACE***

The skin of the face may feel tight for a while and you may feel that it interferes with your smile; this will disappear within a few weeks.

***THINNING OF THE HAIR***

There may be transient thinning of the hair in areas adjacent to the suture line in the temple and behind the ear. The optimum word here is "transient". It is not permanent.

***MEDICATIONS***

Prior to surgery, you will have medications called into your pharmacy. One of the medications is an antibiotic. Please take all of this medication. The other medication is provided for pain relief. Please take the antibiotic and the pain medication with food to avoid stomach upset.

***YOUR SCARS***

After all stitches have been removed, the scars will appear a deep pink color. There will be varying amounts of swelling in and around the scars themselves. With the passage of time, the pink will become white, the firmness of the scar will soften, and they will become less noticeable. Each individual varies with respect to healing, but it takes approximately one year for these changes to occur in most scars.

## RESUMING ACTIVITIES

- 1) **WEARING GLASSES AND CONTACT LENS.** **EYE GLASSES** may be worn as soon as the bandages are removed. **CONTACT LENSES** may be inserted the day after surgery.
- 2) **HAIR AND BODY CARE.** On your first day post-operatively, stand in the shower for approximately 15 minutes and let the warm water run through your hair. If you had lid surgery done, do not be afraid to wet them while showering. Do, however, refrain from letting the force of the shower beat directly on the suture lines. You may repeat the showers 2-3 times daily. You may wash your hair out with luke warm water and baby shampoo in a shower and comb out with a large toothed comb on the second day after surgery. Hair coloring should be delayed until six weeks after your surgery. Do not tweeze the eyebrows for one week.
- 3) **HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES.** You may be up and around the house with your usual activities except those specifically outlined previously.
- 4) **PULL-OVER CLOTHING.** You should wear clothing that fastens either in the front or the back rather than the type that must be pulled over the head for one week.
- 5) **ATHLETICS.** Do not engage in swimming, strenuous athletic activity or exercises that involve turning the head for 4 weeks.
- 6) **KEEPING A "STIFF" FACE AND NECK.** You should not move the face and neck excessively until the skin heals to the underlying tissues.  
Toward this end:
  - avoid excessive grinning and smiling.
  - don't turn the head without turning the neck and shoulders as one unit for two weeks; when you turn do so as if you had a "crick" in the neck.
  - avoid yawning with the mouth opened widely for two weeks.
- 7) **RETURNING TO WORK AND RESUMING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.** When you should return to work depends on the amount of physical activity and public contact your job involves and also the amount of swelling and discoloration you develop; the average patient may return to work or go out socially 2-3 weeks after surgery when the factors are minimal - you'll have to play it by ear. Do not drive for two weeks.

## DAILY CARE

- 1) Go over all of your incision sites four times daily with peroxide on a Q-tip. Keep Vaseline on sutures to soften them, but do not use it on the staples in your hair or get it in your eyes (if lid surgery has been performed).
- 2) Shower as mentioned (see **HAIR AND BODY CARE**).
- 3) Report any excessive bleeding that persists after pressure for 15 minutes.
- 4) Report any signs of infection such as excessive swelling, warmth, redness, or drainage.
- 5) Avoid taking medication on an empty stomach.
- 6) Never wash your hair the day of staple removal, wash it the following day, using baby shampoo only.

## FINALLY

When the bandages are first removed, the face will appear swollen and there will be varying amounts of discoloration. This swelling will subside to a very large extent within two weeks; however; it will take 6-8 weeks for all the swelling to disappear and for your face to reach its final contour.

IF YOU A SHOULD INJURE YOUR FACE . . . Many individuals sustain accidental hits on the face during the early post-operative period. Usually, one need not be too concerned, unless the blow is hard or if hemorrhage or considerable swelling ensues. Report the incident at the next office visit or by telephone if you are sufficiently concerned.

The discoloration will gradually disappear over a period of 10 to 14 days in most cases.

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Report any of the following:

- persistent temperature elevation above 100°
- sudden swelling or discoloration, warmth, or discharge from wound
- development of any drug reaction.

Most of all, be patient during the healing process. If you have further questions, you are urged to call; 567-4868 or exchange (314)388-5208.