



Facelift Surgery

Rhytidectomy

This handout explains how to prepare for your facelift surgery and how to care for yourself afterward.

Following these guidelines will help you avoid complications and recover more quickly.

How to Prepare for Your Operation

Medicines

- Stop taking all aspirin products or anti-inflammatory medicines and other products that affect blood clotting 2 weeks before your day of surgery. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve), vitamin E, and some herbal supplements. Stopping these medicines before surgery will help control bleeding during your operation.
- If you are taking Renova or Retin-A, stop taking it 1 week before your surgery.
- If these medicines are not stopped, your surgery may need to be rescheduled.
- You will be given prescriptions for post-operative medicines at your visit today. We recommend you fill them before your surgery.

Smoking

- If you smoke, do not smoke for at least 2 weeks before your surgery. Smoking greatly increases your risk for complications and will also slow your healing process after surgery.

Preparing for Recovery at Home

- You may want to prepare and freeze meals to have ready for your recovery time. You will be most comfortable eating **soft foods** after your surgery.
- Set up a recovery area in your home. This area might include pillows, books on tape, a radio, cold compresses, etc.

Shaving

- Do not shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.

24 Hours Before Surgery

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before and a second shower the morning of your operation. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.

Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.

- **Arrival time:** Your arrival time is determined the day before your surgery. The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your operation. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206-598-6334.

The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:

- Not to eat or drink after a certain time
 - Which of your regular medicines to take or not take
 - To sip only enough water to swallow your pills
- **Heating blanket:** To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.
 - **Fasting:** Do **NOT** eat or drink anything for 8 hours before your surgery. This includes not chewing gum, using breath mints, etc. If you do not follow these fasting instructions, your surgery may have to be rescheduled.

Day of Surgery

- On the day of surgery, wear comfortable clothing that is easy to take off. We recommend a shirt or blouse that opens in the front, not a top that goes on over your head.
- You will go home several hours after your operation. **After general anesthesia:**
 - You will need someone to drive you home after your surgery.
 - You will need to have a responsible person stay with you for the first 24 hours.
 - We recommend that you arrange to have someone care for you for the first 2 to 3 days after surgery.

Self-Care After Your Facelift Surgery

Cold Compresses and Head Elevation

- **Right after surgery:** Elevate your head and begin applying gauze or wash cloths soaked in ice water to your eyes, face, and neck area. This will help reduce bruising and swelling.
- **The first 3 days:** Continue applying these cold compresses 20 to 30 minutes each hour while you are awake for the first 72 hours (3 days) after surgery.
- **Weeks 1 through 2 after surgery:** Keep your head elevated, especially while you are sleeping. Using 2 pillows, a foam wedge, or sleeping in a recliner chair will keep your head elevated the right amount.

Activity

- Do not drink alcohol or drive while you are taking narcotic pain medicine and for 24 hours after you stop taking it.
- Restrict all your activity for at least 2 weeks after surgery.
- Do not bend over, pick up heavy items, or exercise for at least 2 weeks after surgery.
- Avoid strenuous workouts for 4 weeks after surgery. Heavy exercise will raise your blood pressure and cause more swelling, which will delay the healing of your incisions.
- Do **NOT** turn your head from side to side for 2 weeks. Instead, rotate your upper body when you look to the side.

Dressings

- You will have a special facelift dressing (bandage) under your chin and over the top of your head for support and comfort. This is a bulky dressing. It will be changed in clinic the day after your surgery.
- After the first dressing is removed, a less bulky dressing will be applied. **Please keep this dressing in place all day for the first 3 days after your surgery. You may remove it when you do incision care.**

Showering

- You may shower on the third day (72 hours) after your surgery.
- When showering, use warm water. Avoid hot water because your scalp may be less sensitive to temperature at first, and you could scald yourself.

- After showering, please replace the elastic bandage and wear it all day until your first post-operative visit 1 week after your surgery. Again, you may remove it when you shower and when you do incision care.

Incision Care

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water before cleaning your incisions (areas with sutures and staples).
- Clean your incisions with cotton swabs (Q-tips) 4 times a day. Use a solution of half water and half hydrogen peroxide.
- After cleaning your incisions, use a clean cotton swab to put a thin layer of the ointment your provider gave you on your suture and staple sites. These sites are behind your ear, in front of your ear or temple, under your chin, and on your scalp.

Precautions

- Avoid using curling irons and very hot blow dryers.
- You can start using makeup 7 days after your surgery, but do not apply makeup on your incisions.
- Your skin will be more sensitive for after surgery. For 1 year, use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher and wear hats, scarves, and sunglasses.

Things to Remember

Following these guidelines will speed your recovery and make you more comfortable:

- Keep your head elevated as much as possible to reduce swelling.
- Apply cold compresses for the first 3 days to minimize swelling and discomfort.
- Do not smoke or be around secondary smoke during your recovery.
- Limit how much sodium (salt) you eat. Avoid salty foods such as chips and cured meats, and do not add extra salt to food.
- Do not color your hair for 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Do not swim for 4 weeks after your surgery.
- Avoid direct sunlight.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Appointments: Call Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Center, 206-598-4022.

Established patients with questions about your treatment plan:

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Nurse Voice Mail Line, 206-598-7535.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Otolaryngology resident on call to be paged.

Medicines After Surgery

- Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve), vitamin E, or herbal supplements for 2 weeks after surgery unless your surgeon has told you it is OK for you to start or restart them. These medicines can cause bleeding.
- Follow the directions on all your discharge medicines:
 - Antibiotic
 - Pain medicine

Follow-up Visits

- You will be seen the day after surgery to remove the bulky dressing. This first follow-up appointment is at _____
TIME
on _____
DAY/DATE
- The sutures in front of your ears and under your chin will be removed 5 to 7 days after surgery.
- The rest of the sutures and staples will be removed 9 to 10 days after surgery.
- The sutures behind your ears will be absorbed by your body.
- We recommend that you talk with our licensed *aesthetician* (a skin care specialist) about how to care for your skin after surgery. We have an aesthetician available for all of your post-operative skin care questions.

When to Call the Doctor or Nurse

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Signs of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Swelling
 - Increased pain
 - Foul-smelling or watery discharge from your incision
- A fever higher than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Changes in your vision
- Severe nausea or vomiting

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