

Rhytidectomy (Facelift) Post Operative Instructions

- **DRESSINGS:** The bulky dressing placed at the time of surgery puts some pressure on the areas operated on and helps soak up any external drainage of normally occurring serum and blood. If the dressing is too tight or causes pain, please call us at (360) 479-4370. You may be instructed to cut part way or completely through the portion of the dressing under the chin. This will usually relieve the discomfort. Removing the entire dressing will not cause any problems, in the unlikely event that this seems to be necessary. We remove the bulky dressing the morning after surgery and replace it with a very light one, which you will remove the following day. After that, there are no more dressings.
- **POSITION:** Keeping your head elevated as much as possible will help to reduce postoperative swelling. If you can, sleep on two or three pillows to keep your head above the level of your heart.
- **DRAINS:** On each side of your face, a small drain *may* be placed under the skin and brought out through a small incision behind the ear. These drains evacuate the fluid that accumulates after surgery and enable you to heal faster. When the drain is first put in place, the bulb at the end of each tube will be compressed to create gentle suction. As the fluid collects in the bulb, it will expand. *DRAIN CARE: Secure the bulb of the drain to the dressing on your head with a safety pin. The evening of surgery, you should empty the bulb by opening the plug at the top and pouring out the contents. Do not attempt to remove the bulb from the tubing. Squeeze the bulb to recompress it, and put the plug back into the hole at the top in order to maintain the vacuum. Do this whenever the bulb fills or expands 50% or more.*

If the bulb fills rapidly after emptying it, or you need to empty it more than three times daily, please call us at (360) 479-4370. Dr. Meeks or a nurse will usually remove the drain the day after surgery, but occasionally they are left for 2-3 days. Removing them feels a little strange, but is not painful. You may shower and shampoo your hair the day after the drains are removed.

BLEEDING: Small amounts of oozing and bleeding after surgery are normal. The bulky dressing may be stained and the size of the stain may enlarge after you go home - this is normal. If serious bleeding occurs, apply pressure and call us. Bleeding under the skin flaps that causes serious swelling and discomfort is very uncommon, but if it does occur, it requires attention and evaluation by your surgeon. Call us at (360) 479-4370 immediately.

- **SUTURES:** The sutures in front of your ears will be removed 4-6 days after surgery. If you have had an incision made under your chin, those sutures also will be removed 4-6 days after surgery. The staples within the hair and the sutures behind the ear are removed 9-12 days after surgery.
- **TISSUE GLUE:** Tissue glue may be applied to help bind tissues at the time of surgery to minimize postoperative swelling. If it is used, you will likely not require drains.
- **SUNSCREEN AND MAKEUP:** It is imperative that your scars be protected from the sun for a good 6 months after surgery. Use a sunscreen with a skin-protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 at all times. It should be applied before your makeup. You may begin applying makeup 2 days after your sutures are removed. Speak to our nursing staff or the front office about an appointment for a skin care appointment several weeks after surgery. We provide this service to help maximize the benefits of your "new look."
- **SKIN CARE:** All the skin of the face and neck may feel dry and chapped after facial surgery. We recommend that you make frequent and liberal use of a good moisturizer without fragrances in it.
- **HAIR CARE:** After a face lift, most patients experience a temporary change in the texture and manageability of their hair. Your hair is reacting to the "shock" of surgery and will recover naturally within 6 weeks. If you color or perm your hair, plan to have it done before surgery or wait until 6 weeks afterward for best results. Your hair will be a little "lifeless" during that period of time.

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- **SHAMPOO:** Forty-eight hours after surgery or 24 hours after the drains have been removed, you may wash your hair. You may prefer to have your hairdresser wash it for you. In either case, a hair dryer, if used at all, should be kept on the lowest heat setting, as your scalp may be partially numb.

LONGER TERM POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS*

- **ACTIVITY/SPORTS:** We want you to avoid straining or any aerobic activity for at least 3 weeks after surgery. This is to avoid bleeding, bruising, and swelling. Do not resume strenuous exercise for 3 to 4 weeks. Dr. Meeks will give you clearance to increase your activities according to the progress of your recovery.
- **DRIVING:** You may resume driving when you feel you are able, but wait at least 2 days after surgery. Keep in mind that you must have full use of your reflexes. If pain will inhibit them, don't drive!
- **SEXUAL ACTIVITY:** You may enjoy sexual activity as your body allows with the following restriction: please reread Activity/Sports above and apply the same concept to sex.
- **SUN EXPOSURE:** If fresh scars are exposed to the sun, they will tend to become darker and take longer to fade. Sunscreen can help. Take extra care and precautions if the area operated on is slightly numb - you might not "feel" sunburn developing!
- **WORK:** Follow whatever plan you and Dr. Meeks have agreed upon.