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Facelift Instructions

This handout provides information on how to prepare for your facelift operation and what to expect as you are healing after your operation. Please read the handout carefully. Feel free to ask questions at any time.

Important information about preparing for your facelift operation:

1. Do not take products containing aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin),Vitamin E or red wine for 2 weeks prior or for 2 weeks after your operation. Many medications contain these compounds which are known to prolong bleeding. It is safest to take only Tylenol® for aches and pains prior to your operation.

2. Your prescriptions will be sent to you ahead of time. You should fill these prior to surgery and have them available for when you arrive home from the hospital.

3. Please arrange for a friend or family member to stay with you for the first 24-48 hours following your surgery.

4. Be aware that you will not be able to fly for two weeks following your operation and please plan accordingly.

5. You will not be able to chemically treat your hair for 2 weeks before and for 4 weeks after the operation.

6. In general, you will 1-2 weeks off from work. More limited facelifts require less time off and more extensive facelifts require more time.

On the day of your operation:

- Do not wear makeup, nail polish, contact lenses or jewelry on the day of your operation. Do not use hairspray, gel or mousse.

- Please keep your valuables at home. You may bring your glasses and a pair of sun glasses for the car ride home.

- Wear comfortable clothing that is easy to dress in and out of. Wear a shirt that buttons down the front.

After your operation:

1. After your operation, you will wake up with a bandage on your head. There may be drainage tubes inserted at the back of the head bandage.

2. The bandage on your head and the drainage tubes will be removed the morning after your operation and replaced with a lighter bandage.

3. Sleep with your head elevated on several pillows arranged in a wedge.

4. For the first 48 hours, rest quietly with minimal talking or laughing. You may get up to use the bathroom or to take a light walk around the house. Exercise caution in your home and be careful with tasks such as climbing stairs when you are taking pain medications.

5. Turn your head and neck stiffly and as a unit for the first two weeks after your operation, avoid flexing and extending your neck as well.

6. The most common complaint after the operation is nausea, although this generally passes within 24-48 hours. It is important that you drink liquids frequently after your operation. Do not take your pain medication on an empty stomach as you may experience nausea and/or vomiting.

7. Use the pain medication as prescribed when you are feeling uncomfortable.

8. On the first day after your operation, you may gently wash your face by patting it with a face cloth. You can also carefully brush your teeth.

9. You may shower and wash your hair 4 days after the operation.

10. Do not chew hard or tough foods for the first week after the operation.

11. It will be at least 2 weeks before you can begin light exercise such as: walking or using a stationary bike.

12. You will be able to wear makeup 2 weeks after your operation.

13. Heavy exercise and heavy lifting are not permitted for 6 weeks. Light exercise is permitted after 2-3 weeks.

14. Avoid the sun for 6 weeks after your operation. You must use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 for one year after the surgery. Apply the sunscreen to your face and directly over the scars. It is recommended that you continue to use sunscreen after one year.

15. You will be able to drive after two weeks. Be aware that pain medications cause drowsiness and should not be used before driving.

What to expect as you are healing:

1. You will have bruising and swelling on your face and neck that will take 2-3 weeks to subside.

2. As the swelling subsides, you will feel hard areas under the skin on your face and neck. This is to be expected and will resolve in several weeks.

3. Your incisions may be raised, red, and feel hard for several months, but most incisions are inconspicuous after 2-3 weeks.

4. Numbness in various areas of your face, neck and ears is common and may persist for weeks or months. You must be careful using your hairdryer at this time so you do not burn your skin.

5. It is normal to experience a feeling of tightness under your chin and behind your ears. Your neck may also feel stiff. The tightness and stiffness usually last several weeks.

6. The final result from surgery needs to be judged 6-12 months after your operation.

Follow-up appointments:

1. You will have several follow-up appointments after your facelift operation.

2. Your first follow-up appointment will be at 1 week. At this time, you will have some of your sutures removed. The sutures will be replaced by steristrips. You may shower over the steristrips and allow them to fall off on their own.

3. Your second appointment will be at 2 weeks. At this time, the remaining sutures will be removed.

4. Subsequent appointments will be suggested by Dr. Bartlett as needed.

If you have any questions you may reach Dr. Bartlett by calling the office at 617-735-1800 during and after business hours.