

To : My Patients
From : Vinod K. Anand, M.D.
Re : Some Facts for Patients about Cosmetic Facial and Eyelid Surgery

You will do yourself a service if you read what follows carefully, for here you will find answers to many of the questions that are most often asked about plastic surgery of the face, neck, and eyelids. Most of these questions are universally asked by patients interested in this type of surgical correction.

The purpose of cosmetic surgery is to make you look as good as it is possible for you to look. It cannot do more than that. If you are expecting a transforming miracle from surgery, you will unquestionably be disappointed. Plastic surgery is a combination of art and science. Surgery is altogether not an exact science, and because some of the factors involved in producing the final result (such as the healing process), are not entirely within the control of either the surgeon or patient, it is impossible to warranty or guarantee results. Surgical results from facial and eyelid plastic surgery, however, are more predictable in some patients than in others. This is determined by a number of factors such as the physical condition of the face, the thickness and condition of the skin, the presence or absence of facial fat, the relative Age of the skin, the numbers and types of wrinkles present, the underlying bone structure, heredity and hormonal influences, and others.

It is not possible, by surgical operation, to make someone who is over 40 years old look as if he or she is 20 years old or younger! While this may seem obvious, I mention it because some patients through misconceptions or misinformation believe the clock can be turned back in this miraculous fashion. It cannot.

Surgery intended to improve sagging skin or wrinkles necessarily leaves scars. Despite what you may have heard, all surgical scars are permanent and cannot be erased. The job of the plastic surgeon is to place scars in natural lines of the face and eyelids, where they are least noticeable and are more easily camouflaged by make-up or hair styles. While such scars are permanent, they are rarely noticeable of cause any trouble.

Now for some specific questions:

1. How long will the surgical results last?

Plastic surgery of the face, neck and eyelids retards the aging process and actually slows it up. It slows down the clock, but does not stop it. It is not a question of a sudden falling down. How soon you will want, or require, another operation is highly individualized. I can only speak

in averages. In general, the operation of the facial and neck lift, which is for the improvement of the jowls along the jaw line and the loose skin of the neck, may need to be redone in about five to eight years. Some very few patients are encountered who, for one reason or another, age more rapidly so that another operation may be desired in a shorter period of time than five years. Of course there are some who never require it again. The operation to improve or correct bags of the eyelids usually lasts longer. In most instances, the pouches beneath the lower lids do not recur. As one grows older the skin becomes looser and redundant and a trim of loose skin may be necessary at a later time. In those patient in whom there is exceedingly marked aging and excessive skin of the neck, face and jaw, sometimes (but extremely rarely) it is necessary to perform a second operation within a year to achieve the maximum improvement possible. If this seems to be the situation in your case, I will so inform you in advance.

2. Is facial surgery considered to be a major operation?

This type of surgery very rarely produces serious complications. It is, however, a surgical procedure and, as such, can be subject to unpredictables. Fortunately these are usually minor and amenable to treatment. These will be discussed with you in detail if you so desire.

3. Why are preoperative photographs important?

Just as the chest surgeon cannot operate in an intelligent way without x-rays of the chest, the plastic surgeon cannot operate on the face or eyelids without medical photographs. These photographs are not meant to flatter you. You probably will find it a harsh photograph unsuitable for framing. The photos will show your face in every detail. This aids greatly in the surgical performance of technical variations in the surgery.

4. What type of anesthesia is used during the operation?

Either local or general anesthesia can be used, according to preference. I prefer to use a combination of light general anesthesia and local anesthesia, which I find is more comfortable for the patient. This technique permits a light anesthesia. A high level of oxygen is maintained throughout the surgery, which promotes safety. Local anesthesia is preferred by some patients and is completely adequate for this purpose. General anesthesia requires the services of an expert anesthesiologist, who charges separately. His fee is explained in the preoperative instructions. Whether you have a local or general anesthesia, there will be no pain during the operation.

5. How long is the operation?

The actual surgical time will vary, depending on the amount of surgery necessary for each patient. A face lift usually requires about two hours and eyelid surgery one hour.

6. How long is the hospital stay?

The usual hospital stay is three days. Admission is usually one day prior to the operation at about 2:00 p.m. and discharge time is about 10 a.m. the second or third day after surgery. Admission to the hospital may seem unnecessarily early, but is necessary in order to perform the required

laboratory work and examinations by the resident surgeon and anesthesiologist.

Although the room accommodations are booked well in advance of admission, it may not always be possible to have the accommodation you desire on admission to the hospital. Every attempt will be made on my part to handle this problem to your advantage.

7. Are bandages applied?

Bandages are applied to the head and neck after a face lift. These are removed 48 hours after surgery. Bandages may or may not be applied to the eyelids for a few hours. Following removal of the bandages, ice compresses are applied to the eyes for several hours. Although this will not prevent all bruising and swelling it will help to minimize it. After you leave the hospital these ice compresses may be continued at home from time to time if you find them comforting. Bandages are applied for several reasons, one being to keep the operated area as immobile as possible; therefore, it is also important that telephone calls and visitors should be kept to a minimum for the first 48 hours after the operation. Postoperative pain is rare, and whatever discomfort there may be is usually mild and short-lived and is easily handled with routine medication.

8. When are the stitches removed?

Most eyelid stitches will be removed on the second day after operation. The remainder are removed on the third or fourth day. Some stitches in front of the ears are removed on the sixth or seventh day after a face lift. In most instances, all remaining stitches are removed by the tenth day. Removing stitches is quick and uncomplicated. But you must remain in the area for a minimum of 10 days following facial surgery and one week following eyelid surgery so that the removal may be done.

9. When can make-up be applied?

Eye make-up may usually be applied three days following the removal of the last sutures. This includes mascara, eye shadow and artificial eyelashes. Facial make-up can usually be applied about the tenth day. At this time, you may have to use some type of covering cream if there are still bruises below the eyes. It is important to remove all make-up very thoroughly, using an upward motion, at the end of the day. Oiled eye pads are recommended for the removal of eye make-up. My office staff will provide detailed instructions on use of make-up during the postoperative period.

10. When may I get my hair done?

On the fourth day following surgery you may comb your hair out by using a solution of warm water and a large-tooth comb. Your first shampoo will not be possible until the eighth day following surgery. You may do this yourself or go to a hairdresser who is acquainted with the special procedure of the first hairset after plastic surgery. My office can recommend someone suitable. Rollers may be used, at the Acomfort zone≡ (never hot), since at this time you may not have full sensation in the areas operated upon. Tinting and coloring usually may be done about three weeks following the operation.

11. Is hair shaved in preparation for the operation?

The hair is not shaved. At the time of surgery a small margin of the hair behind the ears is trimmed where the incision will be. A similar area is trimmed inside the hairline above the ears. Neither area is visible once the hair is combed over the incision.

12. Who takes care of me after surgery?

Except over the weekends, you will be visited every day in the hospital by me. If for unforeseen reasons I am unable to visit you, you will be seen by one of my staff. There is an expert team of associates and assistants always in attendance, and they are continuously in touch with me. It is also not possible for me to visit you the night of admission to the hospital. Therefore, it is important that any unresolved questions be discussed prior to admission, if necessary, by a further visit to the office.

13. Who actually performs the operation?

I perform all surgery on my patients. I do have assistants who play an active role in your operation by assisting me just as the anesthetist and the nurse do. However, the actual operative procedure is performed by me.

14. What happens in the postoperative period?

You must remember that before you see the improvement you are expecting you will go through a standard postoperative period in which you will look quite battered and bruised, followed by another temporary period of time when you may look A strange to yourself. This varies considerably with each individual. When both facial and eyelid surgery are performed together you should set aside three weeks for recovery. At the end of this time most patients are able to appear in public, although the scars may need camouflaging with make-up. In some patients this time may be shortened by a few days and in others a slightly longer period is required. I think you should also bear in mind that in some patients undergoing facial and eyelid surgery there is a temporary period of slight emotional depression immediately following the surgery, during the period of time when you look your worst. This is quiet normal and should not alarm you. It is not easy to look bruised and swollen, particularly when natural expectations are toward improvement of your appearance. Fortunately this period usually passes rather quickly.

Vinod K. Anand, M.D., F.A.C.S.

From Aesthetic Plastic Surgery
Thomas D. Rees, M.D., F.A.C.S.