



Lindsey Pennington, MD
FACIAL PLASTICS

Postoperative Instructions: Rhytidectomy / Facelift / Neck Lift

Uncomplicated and early healing depends greatly on how well you care for yourself after surgery. Please read the following instructions carefully before your surgery and ask us any questions you may have.

Introduction

The following is a list of general instructions for your care following surgery. Please read them carefully several times as most of your questions should be answered here. Instructions for your care will also be reviewed the morning after surgery. Carefully following these instructions should help you get the best results from your surgery.

After Surgery

Following your surgery, you must have another adult stay with you for the first two nights. You should plan on remaining within thirty miles from the location of your surgery for this first week. It is also important for you to **keep your head elevated the evening after surgery as well as for the first two weeks following surgery. This can be done by sleeping in a recliner tilted at 45 degrees.** This is the preferred method for recovery and tends to be the most comfortable. If there is absolutely no way to have a recliner available to you after surgery, please let us know and accommodations can be made. This will help reduce facial swelling. **Avoid rolling onto your face. Sleeping with an airplane pillow around your neck will help keep you from rolling onto your face at night.**

General

- Numbness or stiffness around the neck, cheek, face, and ears are common
- **Do not use ice packs anywhere near face/neck lift surgical areas**
- **No** smoking for a minimum of 3 months PRIOR to surgery and a minimum of 4 weeks after surgery.
- **No** alcohol for 4 weeks post-surgery
- **No makeup until cleared by Dr. Pennington**
- **No heat or cool styling, blow-drying or hair products until cleared by Dr. Pennington**
- **No** aspirin, ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, or similar anti-inflammatory medication. Dr. Pennington will advise you when you may resume taking these medications.
- Other blood thinners, such as Coumadin or Plavix, must also be discontinued, under the guidance of your primary care physician.
- No herbal medications, supplements, or teas.
- Increased risk of bleeding includes, but are not limited to Vitamin E, garlic, ginger, ginkgo, ginseng, kava, and St. John's Wort, fish oil, and green tea
- We recommend taking probiotics during the post op recovery period while you are taking all your post op medications.

Daily Care

This care will be reviewed with you when it is time for you to take over after surgery:

1. Go over suture lines twice daily with Anasept on a Q-tip or gauze. After this, again with a Q-tip apply a liberal amount of A&D ointment. Keep moist with ointment for 1 month. Do not use any other creams or lotions unless directed by Dr. Pennington.

2. Steri-Strip tape bandages may have been applied to your incisions. Leave this tape in place. The tape will gradually peel off in a few days or will be removed by Dr. Pennington.
3. If instructed by Dr. Pennington to wear a compression dressing, this should be worn 24/7 for the first two weeks after surgery. Then at minimum every night for the next 6 weeks. Not everyone gets this.
4. Dr. Pennington will instruct you on when you may bathe and wash hair following surgery. Once you have been cleared, only use a gentle shampoo such as Johnsons Baby Shampoo
5. If a drain was placed during surgery Dr. Pennington will manage this daily until the drains are removed.
6. Stitches, if present, will be removed around 7 days post-surgery. Staples will be removed around 14 days post-surgery.

What to expect

Discomfort - is to be expected, the medications provided will help reduce the discomfort, but a baseline level is to be expected post operatively. Do not take medications any other than prescribed. **Do NOT** take NSAIDS (Ibuprofen, Aleve, aspirin etc.) until cleared by Dr. Pennington. Stool softeners and hydration are VERY important post op to help avoid constipation that can develop with pain and anti-nausea medications.

Swelling - is normal, if excessive swelling develops, is asymmetric (one side much more than the other) or is extremely painful, please contact Dr. Pennington. Things to do to minimize this swelling include keeping your head elevated as much as possible over the first two to three weeks, avoiding high salt diet, avoiding bending over or heavy lifting for the first three weeks, and avoiding prolonged sun exposure for the first two to three months.

Discoloration - Bruising will vary like swelling from person to person. Most bruising and discoloration should resolve over the first two weeks. Make-up, **with Dr. Pennington's permission**, can be applied two weeks after surgery.

Numbness - Your face will be numb following surgery. This is normal and will subside over the coming weeks to months. Unusual sensations, pins and needles, and occasionally mild discomfort may occur as these nerves regenerate over time.

Bleeding – if bleeding does occur, lie down with your head elevated. Try to relax. You may take a pain pill or a Valium. Place cool compresses over your eyes. You may apply light pressure to where the bleeding is present. Wait 15 minutes. **If bleeding persists at this point, please contact Dr. Pennington.**

Depression - It is not uncommon for patients to go through a period of mild depression after cosmetic surgery. This typically occurs the second week after surgery while some of the swelling and bruising persist and yet the patient is anxious to see a final result. Realize this is a temporary condition and things will improve. **Focus on diligently following the wound care as well as other activities to help divert your mind. Keeping up with daily routines and schedules as permitted can help decrease this.**

Eyeglasses/Contacts - If not accompanying nasal or eye surgery done at time of facelift, may wear eyeglasses. Take precautions to wear less as they may cause facial swelling to increase. Contact lenses may be worn again per Dr. Pennington's approval

Restrictions

1. **No** cardiac exercise for at least 4 weeks.
2. **No** heavy lifting for 6 weeks.
3. Avoid turning the head or stretching the neck, it will be stiff, turn with your entire body and shoulders when head needs to be turned
4. **No** pullover clothing for two weeks.
5. **No** earrings for 6 weeks. After 6 weeks may start wearing **LIGHT-WEIGHT** stud earrings. Dr. Pennington will let you know when you may start wearing heavy or dangling earrings.
6. Avoid hard chewing foods for two weeks.
7. **LOW SALT DIET!!!** Even the smallest amount of salt can cause a large amount of swelling and drastically increase healing time. (less than 2,000mg per day)
8. **DO NOT EAT – PROTEIN SHAKES, CANNED SOUPS, JELLO etc.**
9. **Eat a super bland, plain diet for first 2 weeks to allow glands in neck to heal, nothing very sweet, sour or spicy.**
10. **No Gum chewing for first 6 weeks**
11. Avoid yawning or wide mouth opening for two weeks.
12. Use a baby toothbrush on the upper teeth for two weeks following surgery.
13. If sneezing, sneeze with the mouth open for two weeks.
14. **No** driving for two weeks after surgery.
15. **No** contact sports for six weeks.
16. **No** hair coloring for 6 weeks.
17. **No** smoking, no nicotine products for a MINIMUM of 4 weeks post op
18. **No** alcohol for 4 weeks post op
19. **No** ice packs to facelift surgical area
20. May apply icepacks to eyes ONLY if eyelid surgery done at the same time
21. **Do not** shower or wash hair or face until cleared by Dr. Pennington

Call Dr. Pennington if you develop:

- **Fever greater than 100.4**
- **Sudden swelling or discoloration**
- **Hemorrhage**
- **Drainage from wound edges or other signs of infection**
- **Development of any drug reaction**
- **Shortness of breath or chest pain, may present directly to ER, please call Dr. Pennington in addition to going to ER.**

The healing time for this surgery is often more than expected and the results are worth the wait. While swelling should be down after two to four weeks, your healing will continue for the next 3 months. I will follow you through this entire process but be patient.

Please do not hesitate to ever contact our office. (318-216-5366)