

Facelift and Neck Liposuction

Home Care Instructions

Uncomplicated and ideal healing depends on how well you care for yourself. Please read these instructions carefully before your surgery and ask us about any questions you may have.

1. **Keep your head elevated as much as possible** starting right after the surgery. Lying down flat in bed aggravates facial swelling. Sitting up and gently walking around is advisable.
2. **Sleep with head elevated on 2 to 3 pillows** (35-40 degree angle) to elevate the head while resting or sleeping. Try to sleep on your back rather than on your side for the first two weeks. If you sleep on your side, bolster your side with pillows so you do not lay fully on your side. Do not sleep face down on your stomach.
3. **Cold compresses or gel packs** that are refrigerated may be used on your cheeks to help decrease swelling. Do not try to apply the cold compress under the facelift dressing. **Do not apply ice or ice packs** directly to your skin. If using an ice pack, always place a washcloth between your skin to avoid frostbite.
4. **Eat a soft diet**, avoiding foods that are hard to chew or may upset your stomach.
5. **Avoid lifting** objects/heavy lifting, bending, straining, and all forms of exercise in the first two weeks.
6. You may brush your teeth gently with a toothbrush.
7. Be careful not to bump your face – beware of restless children, bedmates or pets.
8. **Take the pain medication that Dr. Brunner prescribed as you need them.** Have regular strength Tylenol at home too. **Do not avoid taking pain medication if you are having discomfort.** Persistent discomfort or pain may elevate your blood pressure. This can lead to complications such as bleeding, bruising and swelling.
9. **Take Dr. Brunner's prescriptions (antibiotics) as prescribed.** Do not stop them without consulting with Dr. Brunner first.
10. **Arnica montana pills can be started one to two days before surgery and continued after surgery until bruising is gone.** Arnica cream can be applied directly to bruises after the surgery.
11. **Call Dr. Brunner for persistent nausea and/or vomiting.** Vomiting can elevate the blood pressure to your face, which can lead to complications such as bleeding, bruising and swelling.
12. **Do not resume blood thinning medications** such as Aspirin (including Excedrin, Alka-Seltzer, Asacol, Pepto-bismal), ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), Naprosyn (Aleve), Vitamin E, Fish oil, Flax seed oil, Glucosamine/chondroitin, Ginseng, Gingko, Glucosamine/Chondroitin, ginger pill supplements, garlic pill supplements, and any other Herbal Medications for at least 2 weeks after your surgery. **Ask Dr. Brunner first, before you resume these medications.**
13. **Do not smoke. Do not drink alcohol.** Do not smoke for 3 months before your procedure and two months after your procedure. Smoking can increase your risk of bleeding, infection and scarring. Avoid alcohol consumption for one week before your procedure and two weeks after. Alcohol will thin your blood and increase your risk of bleeding.
14. **Avoid sun exposure** as much as possible for 6 weeks. Use sunscreen SPF 30 or more, if you are outside in the sun or snow.

Prior to surgery, arrange for someone to take you home from the hospital, stay overnight with you at home, and bring you to the office for your first post-operative visit the next day.

Any progressive or one-sided pain, bleeding, bruising or swelling should be reported immediately. If you are at home, telephone our office day or night. If you are in the hospital, please notify your nurse.

The large bulky dressing will be removed after 1 to 4 days. Following this, Vaseline should be applied to the suture lines to keep them moist – usually about twice a day. It is not necessary to apply Vaseline on the paper tapes, which are placed after stitches are removed. If crusting develops on the suture lines/stitches, gently clean them with hydrogen peroxide and a Q-tip once a day. Do not use Bacitracin, Polysporin, Triple Antibiotic ointment or any other antibiotic ointment unless instructed by Dr. Brunner.

Post-Operative Schedule: Your first office visit will be the first day after surgery. The cotton dressing will be removed at this visit. A second more compact cotton dressing is placed for another three days. On the fourth day after surgery, the cotton dressing is removed along with some of the stitches. An elastic face and neck bandage is worn for another one to two weeks (day and night), then for 1 further week at night only. Stitches will also be removed one week after your procedure and 10 to 14 days after your procedure.

HAIR WASHING AFTER SURGERY:

Please start washing/rinsing your hair after the cotton dressing is removed four days after your procedure. The first time you wash your hair, just let the water run through it. Use conditioner on your hair to help soften it. You may not be able to shampoo your hair until it is softened. It will take several hair rinses, before you are able to shampoo your hair.

Do not try to clean everything out of your hair the first time you wash/rinse. It is easiest to do this in the shower.

Do not try to wash your hair by leaning over in the sink, this is too much strain on the facelift.

Do not take a hot/steamy shower. It may make you light-headed and/or cause bleeding in the area of the facelift.

Do not use a blow-dryer or curling iron in the first two weeks after your surgery. Let your hair air-dry.

Some patients have used **Dawn dish detergent** to shampoo out the Vaseline from their hair with good success. Vaseline is very steadfast. It will take multiple washings to get it out. Please be patient and gentle.

If you have any questions or concerns, call the office at (609) 921-9497. We have a 24-hour answering service, which will contact Dr. Brunner. On occasions when Dr. Brunner is not available, surgeons at The Medical Center at Princeton will be on call for her. Should you feel it necessary, go to the Emergency Department at The Medical Center at Princeton and ask for Dr. Brunner or the doctor on call for her.

List of Supplies

1. Vaseline
2. Hydrogen Peroxide
3. Q-Tips
4. Gel packs/gauzes/wash clothes for cold compresses
5. Tylenol
6. Arnica montana pills
7. **Fill all prescriptions** given to you by Dr. Brunner, **before your procedure.**

Common Concerns After Surgery

Bruising, Swelling and Discoloration: This is normal after surgery and will subside gradually over the first two weeks. It will move downwards from the face into the neck due to the effects of gravity. Keep your head elevated on at least 2 to 3 pillows when lying down. Take Arnica montana pills to help decrease bruising. Use lots of cold compresses on your cheeks in the first 4 days to decrease bruising and swelling. After 4 days use warm compresses to dissolve bruising.

Pain: There is minimal pain after surgery. It is worsened by anxiety. Swelling does cause a tight or bruised feeling. It is common to have muscle soreness, especially in the region of the upper neck. Take the medication for pain that Dr. Brunner has given you, but only as much as needed. Excessive use of analgesics may prolong your convalescence. Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen containing medications, as they may cause bleeding. Tylenol is good for mild discomfort after surgery, especially in the daytime. Take the prescription pain medication as you need it. Do not be a martyr and suffer through discomfort. For moderate discomfort and at bedtime in the first week, take the prescription pain medication.

Sutures: Some slight redness around individual sutures is common. However, notify the office if the redness extends along the entire line of the incision or if the suture line becomes tender and swollen. In this case, an early infection may be present and antibiotics will be needed.

Temperature: The body temperature may rise to 101 F after surgery. Drink fluids and rest, but do not stay bedridden. Walk normally around the house and take lots of slow deep breaths to inflate your lungs. If it persists more than 48 hours, report your condition to Dr. Brunner.

Scars: As your scars mature, they may go through a “lumpy” and pink stage. This will resolve over several weeks but final scar maturation – to obtain a flat, smooth, fine-line scar—will take upwards of a full year. Patience is required. Occasionally some widening or thickening of scars may occur, especially behind the ears. Sometimes these are treated medically and sometimes are “touched up” surgically several months later.

Tightness: Due to the swelling and the pull on the deeper tissues, it is usual to feel tightness in the face and neck for several weeks. This gradually resolves and the facial tissues feel soft and normal again.

Numbness: After any surgery, the area may feel numb, and have decreased or altered sensation, especially around the ears and the earlobes. Be careful not to pull your earlobes when you put on and take off shirts and sweaters. Stretch the neck of the turtleneck sweater as you change in and out of it. The numbness gradually resolves by itself over a period of several weeks to months.

Depression: Some people become mildly depressed after surgery. One must be patient during this time, and remember that the swelling and discoloration is only temporary. It is best to adopt a positive attitude, and look forward to resuming normal activities as soon as possible. Although you cannot do any strenuous or aerobic exercise in the first 3 weeks, taking a walk outside helps greatly.

Weak Feeling: It is not unusual after surgery, especially after a general anesthetic, to feel weak, a little “flu-like”, and not quite yourself for a few days. This improves over several days without medication. Drink fluids. Eat regular meals, do not diet. Try to sleep through the night.

Contour Changes: Following liposuction and facelift procedures, there is continued healing of the deeper tissues of the face and neck. This may result in some lumpiness and contour irregularities, which will soften and improve over the first few months. This is most common in the areas around the ears and upper neck just below the ears.

Resuming Activities

Bathing and Showering: As soon as you feel strong enough, usually 2 to 3 days. The sutures may be allowed to get wet after about 4 days. If they become wet, gently pat them dry and apply Bacitracin ointment. Do not put ointment on the paper tapes.

Hair Washing/Shampooing: 4 days after surgery (once the dressing has been removed). Have someone assist you and be gentle. Please refer to the above section on hair washing.

Hair Cut/ Hair coloring/ Permanent: 3 weeks.

Sunglasses, eyeglasses, and contact lenses: Can be worn the day after surgery. Do not wear contact lenses if you have had an eyelid lift too.

Make-up: Can be applied on the cheeks after 3 days. Make-up may be applied over the incision lines about 3 days after all the stitches are removed (about 12 to 14 days). Eye make-up can be worn immediately if no eyelid surgery was performed.

Return to Work or School: Usually 10 days to 2 weeks. Light, non-stressful work can be done at home after several days.

Aerobic Activities: Swimming, tennis, jogging, aerobics, weight lifting, and cycling, sexual activity: 3 weeks.

Contact sports, squash, competitive sports, diving, hiking: 6 weeks.

Driving: 1 week.

Alcohol: 2 weeks. Do not resume smoking for one month.

Smoking: 8 weeks minimum. Hopefully you do not resume smoking.

Blood Thinning Medications (Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Fish Oil, Flax Seed Oil, etc): 2 weeks

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