



Mr Lucian Ion FRCS(Plast)
Consultant Plastic Aesthetic and
Reconstructive Surgeon

Face Lift (Rhytidectomy)

A softer, more youthful appearance, without changing your features.

A tried and trusted procedure

Our faces age for many reasons. Heredity plays a role, as does gravity, which tends to pull soft facial tissues downward. In time our cheeks begin to sag, the crease running from the nostrils to the sides of the mouth is accentuated, and our jaw line and chin lose their smooth, refined appearance. As we age we also tend to lose some of our facial fat and our skin loses some of its elasticity, leading to more sagging of our features.

Exposure to ultraviolet light plays a role as well. Indeed, people who live in tropical climates, where the sun is strongest, often have prematurely aged skin, irrespective of their ethnic characteristics. In these areas, people may seek face lifts in their forties or even younger.

First described over 60 years ago, face lifts smooth and redefine the contour of the neck and jaw line to create a younger, more vital appearance.

- Years of research and experience have led to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the ageing process, the more subtle elements in facial anatomy and the technical ways to restore a balanced and more youthful appearance.
- In addition, thanks to advances in both surgical technique and anaesthesia, face lift procedures have become safer and more comfortable and their results even more satisfying.

It is important, however, to remember that while a face lift can help refresh your appearance it will not erase permanent creases, particularly around your lips. Additional procedures like dermabrasion, laser resurfacing and chemical peels can improve those lines and can be performed in conjunction with your face lift.

Your consultation: talking it through

When you meet with your surgeon, you'll have an opportunity to share your feelings about the results you want to achieve, learn about what will happen during your surgery and help design a procedure that meets your individual needs. It is often helpful to bring a photograph of yourself from the time when you thought you looked your best.

- Your surgeon will take a medical history and ask about any previous facial surgery.
- You'll learn about normal differences in facial symmetry you've probably never noticed before.
- Your surgeon will gently lift your facial skin to assess what you might be able to expect after your surgery.
- He will also explain some of the other effects of surgery, like the fact that the position of your hair in front of your ear may be elevated and that, in men, the beard may be advanced under and behind the ear requiring shaving in that area.
- You'll discuss the extent and position of scars you can expect.

Your surgeon will also explain some of the modifications that have improved the overall results of face lift surgery. These modifications, all of which can be individually tailored to suit your needs, include deep (S.M.A.S.) lifts, chin fat removal, and remodeling of the neck muscles.

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In addition, you'll learn about procedures that can be done at the same time as your face lift, including correction of eye bags (blepharoplasty), forehead lift and the use of fat from other parts of your body to restore lost volume to the central part of your face. You'll also learn about situations where facelifts can be combined with chin augmentation if the jaw contour is somewhat weak, or midface endoscopic lifts for more pronounced definition of the cheekbone area.

Your operation: what to expect

Before your surgery you will receive advice about what to do and what to avoid. For example, if you routinely color or perm your hair it's wise to have it done immediately before your procedure so it will be some weeks before you need to have it done again.

In most cases your face lift will be done under general anaesthetic and you will spend the night after in hospital. More limited procedures can be carried out under a local anaesthetic and sedation, but for a full face lift there is no real benefit from sedation.

Once you are comfortably asleep, the surgeon will make an incision that starts high in the temple area (hidden by the hair at this point) and courses down following the curves in front of the top and bottom of the ear and behind the middle part (tragus). The incision then continues round the earlobe and up behind the ear before curving gently back into the hair. In some cases a second incision is made under the chin where it will also be well hidden. Its purpose is to assist with definition of the chin and neck.

Using these incisions on both sides of the face, the skin and deep tissues are remodeled and redraped. The incisions are then closed with stitches in front of the ear and metal clips in the hair.

Small drainage tubes are inserted under the skin during the operation. These are often removed at the practice, several days after your surgery, so that bruising and swelling around the face and neck are minimal, and return to work and social activities is accelerated. Some surgeons also apply a light bandage around your head at the end of the surgery.

After your surgery

Your bandages will be removed the morning after your surgery. After that, your hair will be washed and you'll be allowed to leave the hospital.

Once at home, it's important to take certain precautions:

- To prevent post-operative bleeding it's important not to engage in vigorous activity for the first five days after your surgery.
- Aspirin should be avoided. Any discomfort can be controlled by taking a mild analgesic such as Paracetamol.
- You may gently wash your hair with a mild shampoo, exercising care in the suture area.

You'll find additional postoperative instructions at the end of this article. You will also receive a complete list of postoperative care instructions before you leave the hospital.

As your convalescence continues, you can expect certain things:

- Your sutures will usually be removed seven days after surgery. It is advisable not to apply any strong chemicals like bleach or ammonia to the area for four weeks following surgery.
- Your scars will usually be very faint at first, however you can expect them to thicken and redden for a few months after your surgery before they return to a more natural skin colour and texture.

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- It is normal to experience some bruising, swelling and numbness after a face lift. These symptoms are temporary and should mostly disappear after two weeks. Numbness takes longer to settle down, and it will require approximately a months for the cheeks and three to four months for the underside of the chin. To help lessen post-operative bruising, we suggest taking Arnica for one week prior to your surgery and two weeks after. After the surgery, products like Lasonil® will be very useful to reduce and clear the bruises.

Complications from face lift are rare

- Should infection occur it can usually be readily treated with antibiotic.
- If a haematoma (a collection of blood under the skin) should occur, a revisit to the operating theatre may be necessary. However, if a haematoma is dealt with promptly it should not affect the long-term results of the surgery.
- Occasionally, delayed wound healing may occur. This is particularly true in diabetic patients or patients who smoke. If you smoke, please discuss your habit with your surgeon.
- Damage to the nerves which control the facial muscles is extremely rare with face lift surgery. In the majority of cases where this does occur there is a full recovery.
- With any surgery that takes more than about an hour there is an increased risk of clots in the leg veins (deep vein thrombosis). Because of this, it is important that, apart from the measures taken during the hospital stay, you continue gentle mobilisation, exercising your feet lightly but regularly in the week following her operation. This will help restore your circulation and reduce the chance of clots forming.

Our services

From your first visit to Aesthetic Plastic Surgery's handsome Harley Street offices, you'll work directly with Consultant Plastic, Aesthetic and Reconstructive Surgeon Mr. Lucian Ion, the practice's director.

Together, you'll explore the possibilities and discuss the results you can expect.

Imaging software will be used to show you how you might look after your procedure and every aspect of your treatment, from evaluation through surgery to post surgical care, will be carefully explained.

More Information

Naturally, there will be many questions you will want to ask before making any decisions about undergoing surgery. Also you will wish to meet you Surgeon - having trust and confidence in one's Surgeon is very important.

Surgery is unique to every patient and a detailed discussion and assessment between you and your Consulting Surgeon is essential in enabling you to make a decision based on correct personal information and advice.

Arranging a medical consultation does not obligate you to anything other than attending the appointment. There is no obligation to proceed with treatment. This is entirely a matter for your decision, after the surgeon has decided on the feasibility and accepted you as suitable.

If you would like to know more information we will be happy to answer any queries either by email, letter or telephone, so please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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