

RealSelf[®] MEMBER GUIDES

Edited by
Sharon, a
RealSelf
Moderator



16 Things I Wish I Knew Before Getting a Facelift

Sharon is our **Facelift** moderator. She developed this list based on first-hand Facelift experiences reported by members of the RealSelf community.

1) Finding the Right Doctor

Find out who the other surgeons go to for their facelifts. If a surgeon is NOT board certified, go to one who is. There are plenty who were smart enough to pass their boards. If you spend more time with a "closer" than you do with the surgeon, run. They work on commission and try to sell you more surgery than you may need. Fancy addresses are just geography and have nothing to do with the results you get. Also, you are paying for those high rents. Go for the best surgeon, not the best address. Go online and check out the programs for plastic surgery meetings and see who is invited by their peers to lecture. It may give you some idea who is respected professionally; though not a guarantee, but something most of us have not considered. - [yogajan](#)

If you need an electrician, don't hire a plumber. I found a facial plastic surgeon. He is a specialist, and only works on the face. - [Brown55](#)

2) What to Ask During Your Consultation

When interviewing the doctor's patients, focus in on the stitch sites. If there are visible scars after eight months, most likely the doctor did not take the time to do the best job. Remember you are not his patient just to make him money; you have elected to do this for results which should last for awhile. - [David22](#)

Prior to selecting my doctor, I interviewed several plastic surgeons, got price quotes and spoke with women I personally know who have had "work" done. My doctor took "before" photos and he sat down with me and on a laptop showed me how I would likely look after a facelift. He also had me look into a special mirror that showed how your face isn't symmetrical. That was funny! In other words, he prepared me that everything won't be PERFECT just as my original face wasn't perfect. - [Blondepeache](#)

One thing that I find very frustrating is that some doctors now do not want to show pictures of procedures that they have performed. They use the excuse of patient privacy laws. The problem with that is that you don't know what kind of results to expect. For instance, I did not expect to have raised scars behind my ears. I have had surgeries in other parts of my

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body in the past and I never had raised scars. My sister did not have raised scars after her facelift. I was surprised and disappointed at the quality of the sutures! - [Sugartime](#)

3) Types of Facelifts

The old facelift just pulled the upper layer of skin, which I call the "wind tunnel" look. Today attention is placed on the underlying tissue as well. - [David22](#)

Sometimes a less invasive procedure is appealing because it is less invasive, but the results tend to be short-lived because the underlying muscle and fat is not corrected: Just the skin is tightened. - [Misty H.](#)

Spend the money for the real thing. My friends who had mini-lifts had revisions done in a couple years and ultimately spent more money than I did. - [yogajan](#)

The mini face lift may not give you the full results that you are looking for, when wanting to restore your looks. Yet, it will give you a nice improvement. So, you may want to opt for a full face lift, depending on your age and target goal. - [hansonscreen](#)

After much investigation of mini facelifts, I chose the Quick Lift instead of the Lifestyle Lift. I look like I had a complete face lift without the "pulled" look. I would recommend that anyone wanting to try this make sure they have complete confidence in their doctor as this IS surgery. - [GrammaJ](#)

Spend a few more dollars and get it done right the first time. Most board-certified facial plastic surgeons offer the same kind of "One Hour Lift" but they do not call it that and it takes more than one hour to perform. But the cost is comparative in value. With Care Credit and other types of financing, why spend the money on something that will not stand up to the test of time? - [Chrystal Eckes](#)

4) Preparing for the Big Day

I saved my pennies and did my homework. I read lots of books on cosmetic surgery -- the best of which was "The Girlfriend's Guide to Cosmetic Surgery" by Charlee Ganny (awesome!). - [Boston9280](#)

I bought an incline pillow to help sleep in an elevated position. Good investment. It supports your lower back. Order from JC Penney or get one at Bed, Bath & Beyond. - [debcartier](#)

5) Pre-op Shopping List

- Button-up pajamas
- Handheld mirror to hold up behind your head and look into your bathroom mirror, so can see where to apply the ointments and peroxide to the areas behind your ears and neck, especially if you don't have anyone helping you.
- At least four clamp hairpins, to hold your hair out of the way so you can see to apply ointments and peroxide.
- Peroxide, Q-tips & baby shampoo - You won't believe how fast you'll go through them. The peroxide keeps away infection and helps the healing process, apply using a Q-tip around the ears and chin areas.
- Witch Hazel - Use in the areas where the sutures are in the hair (Peroxide will bleach out hair).
- Hot water bag - To put ice in
- Dove soap for washing your face after the first week. Skin will become dry at first and this will help, since you can't use harsh soaps or lotions. - [Angellady65](#)

I drank EAS shakes (you can buy a four pack at Walmart for \$5). Low calories (110), lots of protein, vitamins, etc. Goes down nice with straw on the first day. Good nutrition. I plan on living on these for the next week. Along with soup, coffee and anything else I can get in my face with minimal chewing. - [debcartier](#)

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6) What Will Happen to Your Hair?

Do something drastic with your hairstyle beforehand. Everyone seems to think it's my haircut that makes me look different. I had a guy come up to me again just last night and tell me that my new style makes me look 10 years younger. I wanted to smack my husband when he started snickering!

Get your hair cut and colored a few days before you have the procedure done. It will be six weeks before you will be able to have either done again. Plus you will lose some hair from them cutting on you. My hairstyle afterwards looked like it had a few chunks cut out of it. You won't be allowed to blow dry your hair for at least three weeks either. - [Angellady65](#)

On the right side I have a considerable reduction in the length of my sideburn and a large bald patch in my hair. I am not sure if this is where hair has been pulled out or cut off or in fact where cheek skin has been pulled up too high into my hair but I have tufts of hair growing back on the bald patch. - [calamitykatie](#)

7) Tips for Home Recovery

Don't try going through this alone. Have a close friend or nurse stay with you the first week at least. My husband took off two days... that was not enough! You will need their help, if only to help take care of the incision areas. You won't want to and shouldn't do much the first week. Let someone pamper you. - [Angellady65](#)

I was required to spend one night in the surgery center with nurses in attendance and released early Saturday morning to my son's care. My son left on Sunday afternoon and I pre-arranged to have a lady who takes care of plastic surgery patients stay with me for two evenings. After that, I was fine. - [Blondepeache](#)

8) What to Expect Immediately Post-op

The surgery itself went smoothly and I was out of it for much of that day. I awoke to the pain from hell and when I felt my face it was all puffed up. I could hardly feel a person under there! When I looked in the mirror for the first time I was also bruised everywhere (and I mean EVERYWHERE). I didn't look in the mirror much after that! - [trekker](#)

I looked like I was in a Halloween costume! Bloody dreadlocks (description of the drains)! - [Blondepeache](#)

I have learned not to look in the mirror every day. Give yourself time to heal. - [David22](#)

9) How to Control Swelling

Keep cold compresses on the swollen areas for the first two weeks instead of just the first few days. I did this and most of my swelling was gone after the first week and my bruising was almost gone after the second week. My doctor was very surprised. Keep the chinstrap on as much as possible, if you are given one. It isn't comfortable but it does help keep the swelling down. I used one across my forehead too, like a headband, to help with swelling there also. - [Angellady65](#)

Swelling of your face is a weird thing. First off, swelling falls down your face, so your neck will be the last to relax. Swelling also tends to go from one side of your face to the other. Wait it out. I have had several procedures over the years and know that if a doctor tells you two weeks and you can go back out in public, you can at least double that time. - [truckin 916](#)

10) Healing Takes Time

Healing is a slow process and it takes a long time to know the final results. At first you will look overdone, because the skin will eventually relax. Also it takes a while for swelling to go down. You have

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to be patient. Give it at least six to nine months. Results will continue to develop up to a year. - [Misty H.](#)

I have been told by my surgeon that it takes up to one full year to be completely healed from a facelift and for things to settle in. The hardest part about any of these procedures is being patient and giving oneself time. We all want it to go faster but everyone heals at their own rate. So, be patient and you will be thrilled with the end result. - [Redmond852](#)

I was worried about areas on my face that have since shown improvement. If the areas are showing improvement, try not to worry (I know, easier said than done). I had some difficult moments. I had a great doctor who kept reassuring me and I am looking better and better. - [Dider](#)

11) Pain Expectations

Write down when you take your meds. My doctor gave me prednisone, antibiotics and painkillers, though he recommended I use the extra-strength Tylenol first and then use the heavy duty ones for any big pains. - [debcartier](#)

After surgery the doctor gave me drugs that really knocked me out, and I remember little about coming home or settling into bed. The next few days were a trip. I have read that facelifts are "almost completely painless." That you only need Tylenol. NO NO NO. I was in pain -- not excruciating -- but enough that I used my pain meds to sleep through much of it for the next few days. My face really swelled up and I looked like an egg (!!). But a young egg - yes, it was evident immediately that my jaw was tight and my cheekbones restored (thanks to a temporal lift with the face lift). - [Boston9280](#)

The pain is different for each individual. I had incisions from the back of my hair line to my sideburns on up to the top of my head. When the skin is lifted off and stretched back into a different place the nerve endings are affected. This is what causes the long healing period. It takes time for the nerve endings to reattach, so in the meantime there is a very uncomfortable tightening feeling over the top of the head and a feeling as if you have a brick for a forehead. - [Angellady65](#)

12) General vs. Local Anesthesia

General anesthesia comes with risk -- you aren't breathing on your own when you are under general. In the past I have used local with sedation, so there is an anesthesiologist keeping me "under." However, the anesthesiologist only worked Thursdays, and I needed a Monday slot so that I had Christmas vacation week to recover. The surgery was done with just Valium, Ativan and a few injections of local to my face. I DON'T RECOMMEND THIS. Pay to be knocked out unless you know you have a high tolerance for pain. I have a low tolerance (as I learned to my dismay). I was awake and felt tremendous pain towards the beginning and the end. The end in particular was awful. - [Boston9280](#)

I've recently undergone an upper and lower mini face lift. I was wide awake for the entire procedure. There was no pain, during or post procedure, apart from a mild headache for a few days. - [hansonscreen](#)

My procedure was a mini facelift. I was awake. I was able to speak with the surgical team throughout the procedure. I was given a Valium and some pain medication pre-op, and I was given a prescription for pain medication to take home, which I took one in order to rest the first night. - [Diana Professional surgical nurse](#)

13) Going Back to Work

After the surgery, I won't lie, it hurt. But nothing I couldn't handle. I was back at my office in less than one week. I work for myself and could take it easy. I wouldn't suggest going back that soon for most folks. - [Signwench](#)

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I'm a realtor working from a home office so I was working within three days and went out for an appointment within one week. I looked pretty rough so I just told people why. Most people were really interested in the procedure! - [Blondepeache](#)

I had a mini face lift and neck lift. I have a little swelling right under the chin and that is all. I have a home daycare and started back to work on day 8. - [savouray](#)

14) Take Photos to Track Your Results

Take pics so you can see the progress or lack of. - [Dider](#)

When I went into the O.R. there was a picture on the wall of a lady. I wondered who that old tired looking lady was. When I went for my first follow-up appointment, the picture was in my file. I asked who it was and the doctor said it was me! I had no idea I looked that old. I honestly didn't know I looked that bad until I saw the pictures he took in February. My surgery looks good - I look maybe seven years younger - but not half as tired as I looked in February. - [FL721](#)

I had a mini face lift. At first I liked what I saw but the more I "heal" the more I'm realizing this might actually be my final result. - [MariaAnna](#)

15) Lumps, Bumps & Side Effects

Doctors post pictures and testimonials from patients who have good outcomes. We all want to think we will look that good and be that pleased. I cannot stress how important it is to go to a qualified, board-certified plastic surgeon. However, even those doctors will have patients with complications. - [Dider](#)

I just had what was supposed to be a mini lift with underlying skin to be tightened. It has turned into a major ordeal for me. I cannot get the swelling under my eyes to go away. I have tried everything. I am going into my third month after the surgery. - [Hello in AL](#)

Some people heal quicker than others. The lines and ridges will eventually go away. Try not to worry, they WILL eventually disappear. I'm currently six months post-op and those lines still appear and disappear. One lady here is seven months post-op and she is still healing, so don't worry. Try to be patient and wait the six months for the total effect. You will be happy. - [castellano](#)

The lumps all will go away. I'm at a little over seven months out and it looks great. All I have still is a bit of numbness in my forehead and on top of my head. It tingles and itches like crazy sometimes but they say that it could take a year for all to reconnect. - [face neck brow upper and lower eye lids](#)

After my mini lift I had lumps in my cheeks, which were noticeable. A year now after surgery and I still have a lump on one side, and I also still have numbness. I never got full feeling back. I recently had a liquid face lift and the results have been fantastic -- just a week of swelling, and I look ten years younger. It's lifted my jowls and cheeks. - [charlotte_4](#)

I feel one side is pulled tighter than the other and I can't tilt my neck back like I used to be able to do. I feel like I need an extra inch of skin and ligaments, muscle whatever it takes to get back the movement I require to tilt back my neck. I also have some kind of thing going on with the nerves under my chin and along my jawline. The nerve sensations and pain were so bad that I was put on an anti-depressant. I think it helps a little but it doesn't take it all away. I am always worrying that it will never stop but the doctor said it's still healing; however, he did say that this type of pain I have is not typical. -[ParisGirl](#)

You will have that "rubber band" feeling for some time, perhaps months, but I promise it does go away. I personally would be glad it feels tight because you don't have to worry about something sagging as you heal. - [coney](#)

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16) Will You Need a Revision?

My plastic surgeon was pretty upfront about that: He said that if we got closer to the one year point and certain improvements had not been realized through the healing process he would schedule a second procedure. Bottom line though is to pursue a touch-up if the situation really merits it. You will have to pay for hospital O.R. time and anesthesia but should not have to pay the surgeon's fee. I think the surgeons want you to feel good / look good too because it is their name and reputation that is impacted in the word of mouth process. - [medskis](#)

My first upper mini delta lift did not turn out very well. When you opt to have cosmetic surgery, realize that you may need to have a revision or have the doctor tweak his work, because something simple can go wrong and will need to be redone. So, prepare yourself and ask your doctor how he handles revisions. What are the costs of a revision or is a revision free? - [hansonscreen](#)

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The opinions expressed here are just one perspective. We encourage you to do your own research and talk with your doctor. Share what you learn with the community by writing reviews, commenting and discussing with other members.

RealSelf[®] DOCTOR GUIDES

Written By
Rod J.
Rohrich, MD



10 Things Patients Need To Know Before a Facelift

Rod J. Rohrich, MD, a board certified and active doctor on RealSelf wrote the article below based on his experience with Facelifts. For more information visit the [RealSelf Facelift page](#).

1. Choosing the right surgeon.

This is key to a great result. Choosing the right plastic surgeon for your facelift is important as you do not want that “overdone wind-swept look.” You need to have a comfort level and good rapport with your surgeon. It is important to find someone who is open to answering pre- and post-operatives questions. I give my cell phone number as well as my email address to my patients so they can call, email or text me. In my opinion, there is no such thing as a silly or stupid question. I would rather have the patient contact me earlier, than find out something later at a post-op visit, when they should have called me long before their post-op visit.

2. What does SMAS stand for in the deep layer facelift?

SMAS stands for the Superficial Musculoaponeurotic System - for the purpose of a facelift this constitutes the most important part of the face and musculature. A deeper layer facelift helps to enhance the longevity, the shape, and appearance. Everyone’s face is different and each treatment should be individualized. Aging by fat loss and sagging of the facial deep structures are specifically analyzed in an individualized approach to facelifting in order to restore a youthful, balanced, and un-operated facial appearance.

3. When am I a candidate for a facelift?

You are a candidate if you are healthy, have no major medical problems, are realistic about results, and really want to remove some signs of aging, specifically the loss of facial fat and sagging of the face and neck. A facelift is not specifically indicated to totally remove all signs of aging or to remove wrinkles from around the lip area. Other techniques like laser or chemical peels can be done to improve these areas.

4. How long does a facelift last?

A well-done face/necklift can rejuvenate the face for 7-10 years. But it also really depends upon many factors including the condition of your skin, if you smoke or drink, and your age when you underwent surgery. The optimal time to undergo surgery is at a younger age. This way, as signs of aging appear, you will most likely continue to look much younger than your actual age. Further surgery and/or fillers remain an option. I usually begin soft tissue fillers at 1-2 years

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after surgery. This, along with good skin care, no smoking, sunscreens, and sun avoidance will maximize the longevity of the facelift.

The goal of a facelift is to restore a natural, youthful look and to turn back the clock, not to stop it. It is normal to have a small amount of wrinkles and nasal labial folds. It is abnormal to have a tight pulled or wind-swept Hollywood type look. That is not normal, nor is it something that most patients aspire to have. The goal is to make you look natural and youthful and to be a “better you” and not to be someone else. The goal of any good natural facelift is to return someone to a more youthful look so that they will look as good as they feel. The biggest concern of patients is that they will feel distorted, look like someone else, or look operated on. The sign of a good natural facelift is one that does not look like it has been done and the patient will only look refreshed, relaxed, and less tired.

5. What is the normal recovery period for facelift surgery?

Day 1: You will be in the hotel with a light head dressing which will be removed the same day. You will sleep elevated and take antibiotics the first 24 hours only. You will be out of bed that evening and eating clear liquids and fluids.

Day 2: You will be eating a regular diet, up and ambulating frequently. After the second day the dressing will be removed as will be the drains in your neck. Your hair will be washed and you can go home.

Day 5: You will return to the office to be seen for follow-up to remove the eyelid sutures and half of the other stitches. Scar management and incision healing management begin with some facial massage therapy to emphasis wound healing.

Day 10: All of the stitches will be removed and you may return to work day 10-14.

Week 3-4: You will be seen again in follow-up and will resume all skin care and all activities including exercise.

Month 3: You will be seen again in follow-up and post operative photos will be taken.

Annual: You will come in annually so that your surgeon can monitor your long term healing and results.

6. What are the most common post-op sequelae that occur after a facelift?

The most common questions relate to the occasional prolonged swelling and occasional duration of hardness in the neck area. These are easily resolved by massage therapy. The key is to allow for normal wound healing and this will take time. You will “look normal” way before you “feel normal,” because as normal wound healing occurs we go through the early phases of bruising and swelling to a hard feeling that will begin to soften at 2-3 months, especially in the neck areas. These are all very normal.

7. Will a facelift eliminate all of my facial wrinkles?

Of course not, it will dramatically rejuvenate the lower part of the face, but it doesn't remove the wrinkles around the perioral area or the eyelids. We lift the deep layers with the SMAS with the “Lift and Fill” facelift and then the central part of the face is restored with fat augmentation. With early aging you lose facial fat and also have skin sagging later in your 40-50's. The goal is to make you look younger and less tired, but it will not eliminate all signs of aging. If you want to eliminate the wrinkles in the perioral areas, chemical peels or lasers may be needed around the lips or the eyes.

8. Plan to take real time off.

This is very important for a facelift. I tell my patients there are three phases of a facelift - where they are presentable to their family (7-10 days), presentable to your friends (10-14 days), and then to the public (3-4 weeks.) I usually tell my patients they need to take between 2-4 weeks off, as bruising and swelling are

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variable. By 3-4 weeks they can be back in the public eye, such as public appearances or major social events. The most important thing is to stop aspirin and all non-steroid anti-inflammatories, as well as fish oil, at least 10-14 days pre-operatively, to minimize the bruising.

Maintaining a high protein diet will enhance wound healing and minimize fluid collection in the face. I really stress that vitamins along with supplements, as well as homeopathic medicines like Bromelain and Arnica Montana for minimizing bruising, can actually speed your recovery. Apply cold compresses or ice gel to your eyes. Most bruising and swelling occurs in the first 3-5 days and should be resolved by 7-10 days. It is important to keep your head elevated and minimize your activity. Don't get your heart rate above 100 for the first 10 days. It is very important not to begin exercising for at least 3-4 weeks, especially if you have had facial surgery, as an increased heart rate above 100 can cause increased swelling, bruising, and even bleeding.

9. How will I look after surgery and will I have pain?

Amazingly, you will not have a significant amount of pain, if any at all. You will have some feeling of tightness or compression as you will have a light head dressing on. You usually will also have 2 drains in place, which are usually removed at 2 days along with the dressing. This is also when your hair may be washed. Most of the time with a facelift you also have eyelid surgery. Eyelid surgery has more discomfort than the facelift surgery itself. The key is to keep you head elevated and to relax and enjoy soft music. This will help keep your blood pressure normal and allow you to relax better.

10. How long will it be before my face looks normal and when will my scars no longer be apparent?

By 3-4 weeks your face will definitely look very normal. However, the swelling in the face and the neck, especially the face, will take 4-6 weeks to go down. The numbness around the cheek areas will resolve in 3-4 months. You will look normal to others by 3-4 weeks. Your scars from incisions are placed in such a way that those persons who are in your "comfort zone or private space" will not notice them in 4-6 weeks. Those outside your "private space or comfort zone" will not notice them in 3-4 weeks. All of this process is totally normal. If you had eyelid surgery done at the same time, these lag behind the face about 4-6 weeks.

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