

## WHY A FACE-LIFT?

The bottom line is: *do this surgery for yourself...only for yourself.* Your face-lift will not change your life, solve your problems, fix your failing marriage or make you feel 25 again. Most plastic surgeons explain that a successful face-lift will make you look beautifully “rested and refreshed.” That's quite true; it more or less cleans up the haggard look that comes with having survived real life for X amount of years. A face-lift will also eliminate loose skin around the neck jowls and upper and lower eye areas.

Do yourself a favor and don't go to see your doctor with an attitude of talking him into giving you an overkill face-lift, one that's pulled so taut that no character is left in the face. You don't want to look like some bizarre doll. You just want to look like the most beautiful natural version of yourself. This means you must insist that several soft, natural expression lines remain on your finished face. You don't want people looking at you and saying, “What a beautiful face-job”; you want them to say, “You look beautiful.” So, believe me, get that image of a fantasy-face without a single line on it out of your mind right now. It's a dead giveaway of a face-job, and who needs that?

Another thing you must realize up front is that almost no one is born with absolutely symmetrical features. You should not expect to emerge from your face-lift with a “perfect face.” In my opinion, a face-lift is like everything else in life: It's a trade-off. You will most certainly look remarkably better after surgery, but you will never look perfect.

It's not that your surgeon won't try everything within his technical and artistic abilities to achieve perfection. But no matter how brilliant your doctor is, the fact remains that an enormous amount of your finished face-lift is determined by your own body, skin type, skin damage and individual systemic behavior.

Additionally, some people heal much faster than others and experience less discomfort and fewer problems. It's systemic and unpredictable. So don't decide that just because your girlfriend looked and felt fabulous three weeks after her surgery, you will too. The reality is that you may love your face for two-and-a-half weeks after surgery, or it may take you four or six or eight weeks to really feel happy with what you see and begin to have a normal energy level again. The body will heal at its own pace. It will heal itself as evenly and as well as it's capable.

Of course, there always exists the possibility that your doctor actually will not remove enough skin to satisfy you, or that you'll be unhappy with the “surgical look” of something. This is a completely separate issue from your own skin characteristics and systemic makeup, and you'll need to discuss it very openly with your doctor. In all fairness, you will not be able to accurately judge a problem in need or correction until at least the eighth or ninth week after surgery, because the normal swelling, shifting, thickening and pulling of areas will not settle down until then. You may believe you have a problem when in reality it's just the normal healing process that will correct itself with time. However, speak to your doctor as soon as you see anything that bothers you. It's part of his job to provide you with that peace of mind.

If there is indeed a surgical problem you are unhappy about, you must plainly voice your dissatisfaction to your doctor and demand a surgical correction if it's possible. Your surgeon may explain to you, for example, "If I pulled this area tighter, it would have created unattractive lines in the adjoining area." You don't know why he made the choices he did until you give him the opportunity to explain his actions. Often the doctor is right. Sometimes, however, he just didn't remove enough skin, or something is disturbingly uneven. If it is at all possible, a credible plastic surgeon will not hesitate to correct these problems for you at his own expense.

A postsurgical recovery period of at least three months is usually required for most touch-ups or corrections. Some procedures require even longer periods between surgeries; your doctor will advise you on scheduling. Listen to him! It's unsafe to reoperate too soon on an area, and you'll only run into more problems if you proceed before the appropriate time. It's better to be a little patient and end up with a face you love.

So, to repeat, expect the Desired Trade-Off: You *will* look remarkably better.

Don't go looking for every detail to be perfect. The body doesn't usually work that way. It's unrealistic, and you'll only end up driving your doctor and, more important, yourself nuts!