



SAINT JAMES
HOSPITAL

Facelift Patient Information

A facelift (rhytidectomy) is cosmetic surgery to lift up and pull back the skin to make the face tighter and smoother.

The procedure is designed to reduce flabby or sagging skin around the lower half of the face (mainly the jowls) and neck.

If you're thinking of going ahead, be absolutely sure about your reasons for wanting a facelift and do not rush into it. The results cannot be guaranteed and there are risks.

What does a Facelift involve?

A facelift is usually carried out under general anaesthetic.

The surgeon will need to know if you are taking any medication that thin the blood such as aspirin, clopidogrel, warfarin or rivaroxaban or medicines that reduce your immunity or ability to heal.

There are many different kinds of facelift, but generally the surgeon will:

- Make cuts (incisions) at the temples that extend down in front of your ear, underneath your earlobe and behind the ear
- Make cuts under the chin if the jawline is also being lifted
- Remove the surplus facial skin
- Pull the remaining skin backwards and upwards before stitching it into its new position
- Sometimes redistribute facial fat and tissue or add this to the face
- Bandage the face to minimise bruising and swelling

It usually takes 4 to 6 hours, and most people need to stay in hospital overnight.

Pain relief is provided if you experience any discomfort afterwards.

What can I expect after a Facelift?

It takes around 4 weeks to fully recover from a facelift. You may need to take time off work or make arrangements to work from home.

Bruising is visible for at least 2 weeks. It could take up to 6 to 9 months to see the full effect of the facelift.

You will not be able to drive for a number of days after the operation – your surgeon would advise about this.

You will have to avoid showering and getting the bandages wet for the first 2 days, and avoid strenuous activity, saunas and massages for at least 2 weeks.

You also need to keep your head propped up with pillows for a couple of days while resting to reduce the swelling.

After about a week: Stitches are removed (unless you had dissolvable stitches).

After several weeks: Bruises, scars and redness should have faded.

After 6 to 9 months: The full effect of the facelift should be seen.

What could happen following a Facelift?

After a facelift, it's common to have:

- A stiff, puffy and numb face for a few weeks or months
- Temporary bruising of the cheeks – the bruises will eventually move down the neck with gravity
- Scars – these fade, but will not completely disappear



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- A raised hairline or sideburn

A facelift can occasionally result in problems, including:

- A collection of blood underneath the skin (haematoma)
- Nerve injury and loss of sensation or movement in the face depending on what technique is used
- Asymmetrical facial features – including the position of the earlobe
- Hair loss or a small but permanent reduction in hair growth around the scars
- Thick, obvious scars developing.
- Residual laxity
- Wound issues, especially behind the ears
- Pulled down earlobe

Any type of operation also carries a small risk of:

- Excessive bleeding
- Developing a blood clot in a vein
- Infection
- An allergic reaction to the anaesthetic

The surgeon should explain how likely these risks and complications are, and how they would be treated if they occurred.

Smoking and Surgical Risks

Smoking increases the risk of complications both during and after cosmetic surgery.

Chemicals in cigarettes restrict blood vessels and reduce the amount of oxygen carried in your blood. This can affect your safety during the operation and your healing afterwards.

Risks During Surgery

Smoking can lead to:

- Reduced oxygen delivery to tissues, making the procedure riskier
- Higher risk of anaesthetic complications, including breathing difficulties
- Poor blood flow, which can affect the body's ability to tolerate the surgery
- Increased risk of skin and tissue damage during procedures that rely on good circulation

Risks After Surgery

Smoking also significantly increases the risk of:

- Delayed wound healing
- Infection at the surgical site
- Poor scarring or widened scars
- Skin or tissue loss (necrosis), especially in procedures involving skin flaps

To reduce these risks, patients are strongly **advised to stop smoking (including e-cigarettes and nicotine-containing products) for at least 6 weeks before and after surgery.** Quitting allows your circulation and oxygen levels to improve, supporting safer surgery and better healing.



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What if I have concerns?

You should contact the ER or the ward, as instructed prior to discharge if you have severe pain or unexpected symptoms.

Cosmetic surgery results may not always meet your expectations. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can discuss this with your surgeon.