

FACE TIME



YOUR COMPREHENSIVE
GUIDE TO THE INS AND OUTS
OF FACELIFT PROCEDURES.

BY BONNIE STARING

We've all done it—stood in front of a mirror and pulled up on a “mature” area of our face to see how it would change if we had a little lift. Of course, an actual surgical facelift procedure is much more complex than that. These rejuvenating and correcting surgeries are strategic in nature and, when performed by a certified, experienced professional, can not only reverse the hands of time, but can also help slow down future signs of aging. But which procedure is right for you? Three facial plastic surgeons offer their expertise to help clarify and demystify the most popular lifts performed today.

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

THE BASICS

Not all lifts do the same thing. And lift procedures offered today aren't quite the simple lift-and-cut procedures they were when first introduced in the early 1900s. Today's procedures focus on varying areas and tissues of the face and can be customized and combined depending on your unique needs. Here are some quick facts:

A LIFT WON'T ADD VOLUME

“Facelifts put things back where they were before, but they don't necessarily increase volume,” advises Dr. Lawrence Tong, MD, FRCSC, FACS, a cosmetic plastic surgeon in Toronto. See “Complementary Procedures” for information on adding volume to certain areas of the face.

LIFTS AREN'T JUST FOR WOMEN

“Men are undergoing plastic surgery procedures at a record rate, which is continuing to grow,” says Dr. Jamil Asaria, MD, B.Sc., FRCSC, a plastic surgeon in Toronto, where over 20 percent of facelift patients are men.

RECOVERY TIMES VARY

As with all surgical procedures, “lift” recovery times vary due to individual patients, the extent of the surgery and other factors. As a general guideline, most patients may return to regular, light activity (that is, a desk job) within one to two weeks and more strenuous activity after four weeks.

THE TYPES

TRADITIONAL (SMAS) FACELIFT

The traditional facelift involves the most area—the lower-to-middle face and neck. This procedure smooths the skin around the nasolabial folds (the lines running from the sides of the nose to the corners of the mouth), mouth and jaw-line as well as minimizes jowls. Today's facelift also includes an adjustment to the subcutaneous musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS), which is the membrane that surrounds and connects the deeper tissues of the face, including the muscles that control facial expressions.

“SMAS facelifts focus on the structures under the skin, not just correcting the skin,” says Dr. Kris Conrad, MD, FRCSC, FRCS, FACS, director of the Facial Plastic Surgery Clinic at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. In this procedure, developed in 1969, a surgeon tightens the SMAS and attaches it to fixed skeletal points, giving the patient's skin a firmer support to rest upon, and provides longer lasting results than non-SMAS procedures.

“An SMAS facelift is not exactly but similar to a tummy tuck,” explains Dr. Tong. “You get rid of the fat and tighten the skin, but you also do something to the muscle.”

After all that heavy lifting, what gets left behind? “A scar that goes into the hairline behind the ear,” explains Dr. Asaria. “Facelift scars generally heal as very fine lines that should only be visible to your surgeon.”

INCLUDES:

the lower to middle face and neck

NOT INCLUDED:

the eye and brow area

PROCEDURE LENGTH: approximately three to four hours

COST: \$12,000 to \$19,000

MINI FACELIFT

“When you do the face alone, that's what we call the mini facelift,” says Dr. Tong. Also referred to as a “lifestyle” or “lunchtime” facelift, the mini lift is commonly recommended to younger patients (40 and up) experiencing signs of aging on the face, but not yet on the neck. This lift is also an option for “a patient who doesn't mind if the neck doesn't get improved,” adds Dr. Tong. “But if you are seeking correction of heavy jowls, sagging of the midface, or significant extra skin under the neck, a mini facelift may not be the right choice for you.”

As with a traditional facelift, some adjustment to the SMAS may be involved with a mini lift procedure, but to a lesser extent. The main benefit is a reduced recovery time. In 2006, Dr. Conrad and colleague Dr. Nabil Fanous presented the optimal modality technique, often referred to as a lifestyle facelift, which Dr. Conrad describes as “a hybrid between simple skin elevation and deeper dissections to address the changes in the patient's SMAS.”

INCLUDES: the lower face only

NOT INCLUDED: the neck, cheek, eye and brow area

PROCEDURE LENGTH: approximately two to three hours

COST: \$8,000 to \$14,000

DEEP PLANE FACELIFT

This procedure involves tightening of the facial muscles and tissues beneath the SMAS, as well as the SMAS and skin. “Deep plane facelifts are for people who have advanced facial changes due to the aging process and require deeper dissection and perhaps a more aggressive approach,” explains Dr. Conrad. Due to the depth of incisions and dissections, patients can expect longer recovery times than those of other facelift types.

INCLUSIONS, PROCEDURE LENGTHS AND COSTS CAN VARY DEPENDING ON PATIENT'S NEEDS.

Please consult with a facial plastic surgeon specializing in this type of procedure for more information.

BROW LIFT

Usually performed as an endoscopic procedure, a brow lift adjusts the position of the brow and smooths the skin across the forehead.

The procedure also helps prevent a wrinkle-increasing phenomenon from reoccurring: once the brow starts to droop, many people will use their forehead muscles subconsciously to lift the brow back into place. “And when you do that, you often have a lot of furrows or wrinkles on the forehead,” says Dr. Tong.

“For many years I've been trying to rename ‘brow lift’ to ‘forehead reshaping’ because dramatic lifting has given this procedure a bad reputation,” says Dr. Conrad. “I adjust the lateral aspect of the brow to reshape the forehead without creating exaggeration.”

Thinking Botox will do the same as a brow lift? Think again. “Botox will drop a person's brow because it relaxes that muscle,” explains Dr. Tong. So, in some cases, ►

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ENHANCE GUIDE

patients may end up with completely smooth but droopy foreheads.

INCLUDES: the brow area only
NOT INCLUDED: the eyelids
PROCEDURE LENGTH: approximately three hours
COST: \$5,000 to \$8,000

EYELID LIFT

Blepharoplasty, or an eyelid lift, is a popular surgical procedure that tightens the upper or lower eyelid area to reduce additional skin folds and sagging. "It's the descending of the fat from the lower eyelid that produces bags under the eyes," explains Dr. Conrad. "A lower eyelid lift can correct that to create a more youthful appearance."

Eyelid lifts are often performed in tandem with a brow lift. "You can't necessarily correct everything with one procedure," says Dr. Tong. "If you have sagging lids and a sagging brow and you only did a brow lift, you'll tend to still have some sagging lids."

INCLUDES: the lower eyelids or upper eyelids, or both
NOT INCLUDED: the brow area
PROCEDURE LENGTH: (upper or lower): approximately one to two hours
PROCEDURE LENGTH: (upper and lower) approximately two to three hours
COST: (upper or lower) \$3,000 to \$5,000
COST: (both upper and lower) \$5,000 to \$8,000

COMPLEMENTARY PROCEDURES

FILLERS/FAT GRAFTING

Another sign of aging is the loss of volume in certain areas of the face. Although fillers provide a volumizing effect, more and more patients are opting for fat grafting. Why? "You're going under [general anesthesia] to have a procedure done anyway, and it's a permanent solution," says Dr. Tong.

"Softer, more youthful results are obtained by carefully adding fat to the valleys under the eyes, the hollows in the cheeks and the folds around the mouth," says Dr. Asaria. "I now combine fat grafting with the majority of the blepharoplasty (eyelid lift) and facelift surgeries that I perform."

PROCEDURE LENGTH: approximately one to two hours
COST: (fillers) varies by professional performing the work and product used
COST: (fat grafting) \$3,000 to \$7,000

NECK LIPOSUCTION

Liposuction can be used on the neck area to help eliminate excess fatty tissue and reduce the appearance of jowls. This procedure is usually performed along with a traditional facelift, but can be done on its own. "While liposuction alone will not produce as effective a result as a facelift, it can be a good option for those wishing to avoid a more involved procedure," says Dr. Asaria.

PROCEDURE LENGTH: approximately 30 minutes
COST: \$2,000 to \$3,000

"FACELIFT SURGERY IS NOT LIKE PICKING A COMBO FROM BURGER KING. IT SHOULD BE MORE LIKE SUSUR LEE CRAFTING A PERFECT MENU FOR YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL."

DR. JAMIL ASARIA, MD, B.SC., FRCSC

SKIN TIGHTENING

Although the results may not be as effective as a surgical procedure, skin-tightening treatments are less invasive and require a shorter recovery period. In these procedures, professionals use lasers to apply heat to subcutaneous fat to melt it away and to collagen to encourage shrinking. "Not only do we reduce some of the bulges of the tissues, but we also affect the skin and the skin contraction on looser areas that we might not want to excise," says Dr. Conrad.

PROCEDURE LENGTHS AND COST VARY:
Please consult with a professional for more information.

LIFT CONSIDERATIONS

BE REALISTIC You should have realistic expectations of what your results will look like and what those results will do for you. "A good example of this is the struggling actor who comes in and says, 'If I can get this done then I'm going to be on the A list.' Meanwhile, he's a terrible actor in the first place," explains Dr. Tong.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK All surgeons advise that prospective patients research the procedures they are considering as well as the professionals with whom they are consulting. "A lot of people will look at before-and-after photos and assume that's what they're getting, when that patient may have received additional procedures and fillers," says Dr. Conrad. "Always ask the surgeon for clarification."

STOP SMOKING "Smokers are poor candidates for facelifts because the nicotine significantly effects the healing," explains Dr. Tong. He insists, at minimum, that patients stop smoking two weeks prior and two weeks after any facelift procedure.

CHOOSE WISELY "Facelift surgery is not like picking a combo from Burger King," says Dr. Asaria. "It should be more like Susur Lee crafting a perfect menu for you as an individual. That is why facelift surgery, in particular, needs to be performed by someone who can help you to make the right choices."

When it comes to plastic surgery, all surgeons agree that the only "right" time for a procedure is when a patient feels confident and comfortable about his or her choice. We hope this guide makes your selection easier.

The last celeb you would have guessed may have had some facial work done. Has she or hasn't she? You be the judge at elevatemagazine.com/celeb_facelift.

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