

General advice following facial surgery

First day(s) in hospital:

If you have drains in place, these will be removed on days 1-2. At first there may be some pain which should be controlled with pain relief. Any facial swelling will peak at around 3-4 days after surgery and can be controlled by sleeping with your head raised on pillows (or ideally using a wedge shaped pillow), wearing a facemask (if supplied with one).

During your surgery, you may have had a facemask supplied by your surgeon. If so, the pressure garment team will check this on the ward. They will show you how to take the mask on and off, and supply you with a second mask, so that you can always have a clean one to wear. You need to wear your mask day and night, except when bathing and eating, for the first 2 weeks after surgery to reduce swelling.

Once at home, it is important to take certain precautions:

To prevent post-operative bleeding, avoid aspirin and do not engage in vigorous activity for the first 5 days after your surgery. Control discomfort with a mild analgesic such as paracetamol. You may gently wash your hair the day after surgery. You should use a mild baby shampoo and a hair dryer on a cool setting if you are drying your hair. Avoid rubbing any incision areas. If you have an incision behind your ear you may be asked to use topical antiseptic cream as this area can be harder to keep clean. Reduce facial swelling by sleeping semi-upright and avoiding stooping or bending over.

As your recovery continues, you can expect certain things:

We will remove the remaining stitches at 7-14 days after surgery. Do not apply any strong chemicals (e.g. hair bleach) to the area for 4 weeks. Your scars will get thicker and redder for a few months after surgery and then return to a more natural skin colour and texture. After facial surgery it is normal to experience some bruising, swelling and numbness. Bruising and swelling should resolve after 2 weeks, numbness might take up to 4 months.

Complications from facial surgery are rare:

If you get an infection, we will give you antibiotics to take. You may need to re-visit the operating theatre if a haematoma (a collection of blood under the skin) occurs. If it is dealt with quickly, it should not affect the long-term results of the surgery. In some patients (e.g. diabetic patients or smokers) delayed wound healing may occur. If you smoke, please discuss this with your consultant.

Damage to the facial nerves is extremely rare during facial surgery. If this does occur, there is a full recovery in the majority of cases. There is an increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (blood clots in the leg) with any surgery that takes more than about an hour. To reduce the chance of clots forming please walk or exercise your feet regularly in the week following your operation.

Recovery:

After facial surgery it is normal to have numbness or odd sensations in the cheek and neck which should improve by 4 months. It is also common to have contour irregularities that will settle with the aid of massage. Any scars and wrinkling of skin folds (particularly behind the ears) will also settle in a few weeks.

This is general advice. Please also follow any specific post-operative advice given to you by clinicians before your surgery if applicable. If you have any further questions please ask a member of the facial palsy team.

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