

# Short Scar Neck Lift

## Neck Lift Using a Submental Incision Only



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### KEYWORDS

- Neck lift • Short scar neck lift • Submandibular gland reduction • Partial digastic myectomy
- Sub-platysmal lipectomy

### KEY POINTS

- For a subset of patients, poor neck contour exists as a largely isolated problem and in many cases these patients can be treated with a short scar neck lift procedure in which no skin is removed.
- Typically, these patients include younger women with full, obtuse necks, and young and middle-aged men with poor neck contour.
- The procedure is performed through a submental incision without any removal of skin and relies on modification of deep-layer structures to improve neck contour.
- “Excess” skin is allowed to redistribute itself over the increased neck surface area created when deep-layer maneuvers are performed, neck contour is improved, and the cervicomental angle deepened.
- For properly selected patients, a short scar neck lift can produce a marked improvement in facial appearance.

### INTRODUCTION

A well-contoured neck is paramount to a fit, healthy, decisive, and attractive appearance and improved neck contour is one of the most rewarding and gratifying changes a patient can make in his or her appearance. In many cases in which advanced aging is present elsewhere on the face, improving neck contour alone is a hollow victory and neck lift must be performed in conjunction with lifts of the face and jaw line and other areas if a harmonious, balanced and natural-appearing improvement is to be obtained. For a distinct subset of patients, however, poor neck contour exists as the predominant problem and an isolated neck lift procedure is artistically appropriate. In many cases, these patients can be treated with a short scar neck lift procedure in which skin need not be removed. Typically these patients include younger

women with full, obtuse necks, and young and middle-aged men with poor neck contour. Often these patients report that their full obtuse necks have been present even in youth, and that their parents, siblings, and other relatives are all troubled by a similar appearance.

### SHORT SCAR NECK LIFT: DEFINITION

Short scar neck lift is a term used to describe a neck lift performed through a submental incision only with no peri-auricular incisions, and one in which no skin is removed.

### WHO ARE THE BEST CANDIDATES FOR SHORT SCAR NECK LIFT?

In general, men are the ideal candidates for short scar neck lift as male attractiveness is not as

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**Fig. 1.** Short scar neck lift in a young man with short hair. Before and after surgery views of a man who has had no prior surgery. Note lax skin, obtuse cervicosubmental contour, and “double-chin” appearance when the patient looks down in before views. A large submandibular gland can easily be seen in the lateral view and easily palpated on physical examination. His short hair ostensibly precludes traditional neck lift or facelift surgery. Same patient after short scar neck lift. The procedure included excision of excess subplatysmal fat, submandibular salivary gland reduction, superficial digastric myectomy, and anterior platysmaplasty. No incisions were made in the peri-auricular areas. Note well-defined jaw line and attractive, youthful-appearing neckline even when the patient looks down. The only scar is in the submental area. No skin was removed in the procedure. Surgical procedure performed by Timothy J. Marten, MD, FACS. (Courtesy of Timothy J. Marten, MD, FACS, Marten Clinic of Plastic Surgery, San Francisco, CA.)

closely tied to youth, and an appealing masculine appearance is not as dependent on the tight jaw line and inverted oval facial shape that typically defines the attractive female face. Indeed, a more bottom heavy, square facial shape, and a heavier jaw line are often regarded as essential to a masculine appearance, and as such a facelift in men can often be deferred until later in a man’s life than is the case with women. Men also typically have thicker more elastic skin that better redistributes itself and contracts over the improved neck surface created in a short scar neck lift procedure. In many cases, a short scar neck lift is applicable to men well into their fifties or early sixties.

Carefully selected women can be very good candidates for a short scar neck lift procedure despite the considerations mentioned, but typically are in a younger age group, ranging from late teens to mid-thirties. As women enter their late thirties and beyond, a short scar neck lift is typically artistically less appropriate, as significant aging is usually present in the jowl and jaw line area by that time and simply targeting the under-jaw area creates disharmonious and unfeminine appearances. Skin type is also important, and better outcomes are typically obtained in darker-complected women of Mediterranean, Asian, and African ancestry, than in fair-skinned women of Northern European origin.

Another subset of patients who are usually excellent candidates for an isolated neck lift and short scar neck lift procedure are patients who have undergone previous well-performed facelifts but timidly performed neck lifts. These patients often will not benefit from additional skin excision, but problems of deep-layer origin in their necks have not been addressed and residual fullness due to deep-layer problems are still present. A

short scar neck lift can be transformative in such cases.

### SHORT SCAR NECK LIFT: THE CONCEPT

Although submental liposuction alone will rarely produce optimal neck improvement for reasons discussed (see Timothy Marten and Dino Elyassnia’s, “Neck Lift: Defining Anatomic Problems and Choosing Appropriate Treatment Strategies,” in this issue), a neck lift performed through a submental incision without any removal of skin can create attractive cervical contour in many patients if proper modification of deep-layer structures contributing to cervicosubmental obtuseness is made (**Figs. 1 and 2**).

This is because, unlike liposuction, a neck lift performed through a submental incision allows deep-layer problems and platysmal laxity typically present in most patients seeking neck improvement that comprise the overwhelming majority of their neck problems to be addressed.

### SHORT SCAR NECK LIFT: WHAT ABOUT THE EXTRA SKIN?

A common question creating an obstacle to adopting the short scar neck lift strategy is “how can good neck contour be created without removing and tightening the skin?” and its corollary “what happens to the ‘excess’ skin if only the deeper layer treatment is made and no skin is excised?” The answer to these questions and this conundrum is twofold: first is the simple but often difficult to accept concept that in a properly performed neck lift, improved contour is created by modification of deep layers of the neck, *not* by tightening the skin. Skin is intended to be a

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