

# Pearls in Facelift Management

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## KEYWORDS

- Facelift • Facelift pearls • Rapid recovery facelift
- Preoperative • Management

## PREOPERATIVE PEARLS

The preoperative management of a facelift patient sets the stage for a streamlined surgery coupled with a speedy postoperative recovery. Various recommendations are started well before the surgical procedure begins to ensure the best possible results and experience for the patient. Although the surgical result is clearly the most important gauge by which rhytidectomy surgery is measured, one must not underestimate the patient's perspective regarding the surgical experience. This perspective includes anxiety about surgery, postoperative discomfort, and ease of recovery with return to normal daily activities. In many cases, these concerns are some of the most important considerations that prevent patients from undergoing cosmetic surgery. If a patient recovers quickly with minimal bruising, this experience will lead to a high level of satisfaction and in many cases can evolve into the best marketing technique for a surgeon's practice. A surgeon's patients form the strongest practice-building tools, and quick and uneventful recovery from surgery will undoubtedly facilitate patients in encouraging others to come under a particular surgeon's care.

The authors take several steps to ensure a smooth recovery period with outstanding results. Such steps are important in the wound-healing process and also are critical in enabling patients to feel that they are contributing to their own recovery.

### *The Facelift Consultation*

The initial cosmetic consultation with the patient sets the stage for everything that comes thereafter.

Although many physicians believe the consultation begins when they first walk into the room to examine the patient, this is hardly the case. The consultation actually begins well before the physician ever sets eyes on the patient and includes the physician's reputation as a surgeon, the physician's relationship with colleagues (other physicians or nurses), bedside manner, Web site, and even the press he or she has received. All these items are measures by which the physician will be evaluated before the patient ever sets foot in the office.

The next critical measure before the actual office consultation is the patient's first interaction with the office, which occurs over the telephone. When the patient calls to schedule, is making the appointment a pleasurable experience? Is it difficult to get through on the phone? Is the patient placed on hold for an extended period of time? If the patient must leave a message, is the call returned promptly? Most importantly, is the staff informative and courteous? Are they able to answer detailed questions about the practice, the physician's medical background and board certification, frequency of performing surgery, and hospital affiliations? All these points, which may seem inconsequential to the average physician, are paramount in the patient's mind when choosing a plastic surgeon.

The next and most critical test is the actual office visit. Again, it is the staff that makes the first impression. When the patient arrives, is the staff friendly and engaging? Is the office well appointed and tastefully decorated (**Fig. 1**)? Is the environment warm and receptive to the patient or cold and sterile like a hospital clinic?

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**Fig. 1.** (A) Reception desk and (B) hallway in surgeon's office.

In the authors' practices, after the consultation is completed and the patient has decided to move forward with scheduling surgery, the surgical coordinator takes over. The patient is given a medical clearance form to be completed by the primary care physician and detailed preoperative instructions, which the patient takes home to review. Finally, a preoperative visit is set up that occurs 2 weeks before surgery.

Approximately 6 weeks before surgery, the authors like to have many patients start a formal skin care routine, which complements any facial skin tightening surgery. The authors prefer the Obagi Condition & Enhance system (Obagi Medical Products, Long Beach, California) (Fig. 2) for surgical procedures with a 0.05% tretinoin regimen. This system is convenient for patients because it is an all-inclusive regimen that is professionally packaged, has a respected brand name, and provides predictable results. The system comes in two forms; the authors prefer the system designated for surgical procedures, which is a milder version of the prior Nu-derm regimen. The authors provide the patient, free of charge, an Obagi travel-pack size. This courtesy helps prepare the skin for surgery and gives patients great results with glowing skin; it also introduces patients to a product that they can continue to use for years after the procedure is completed. Having this constant return of patient flow after surgery will encourage patients to stay in touch with the office and keep abreast

of all of the latest technological advances and trends.

**Two Weeks Before Surgery**

The 2-week window before surgery is a critical period in preparing the patient for a rapid and smooth surgical recovery. This process begins during the ever-important presurgical visit. During this extensive office visit the patient is educated about the mechanics of surgery and the recovery period. During this consultation, all remaining patient questions are answered, and patients are prepared for the upcoming surgical procedure.



**Fig. 2.** Obagi skin care products (Obagi Medical Products, Long Beach, California).

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