Rhytidectomy

The Greek word for wrinkle is “rhytid.” The suffix -ectomy means “to remove”; thus rhytidectomy is the medical term for the operation designed to remove or lift wrinkles and sagging tissues from the forehead, face, and neck. The term “face lift” is often used incorrectly to describe a total facial rejuvenation, which, in reality, consists of eyelid surgery, face lift and perhaps skin resurfacing. While a “face lift” provides the foundation for the rejuvenation process, other procedures may add the “finishing touches.” By no means, however, does this mean that every patient who requests a face lift must have any additional procedures.

The goal of the face lift operation is to reduce the sagging and wrinkling caused by loose skin and to lift or reposition both the muscles and fatty tissues of the face and neck which tend to sag with advancing years or premature aging. Face-lifting does not correct problems in the upper or lower eyelids, or the wrinkles or creases in the lips—other procedures (Blepharoplasty or skin resurfacing) are required for these conditions.

Early sagging tissues in the brow, jaw line and neck can be repositioned with a face lift. Deep folds extending from the nose to the lateral corners of the lips may be improved but not eliminated with a Stage II face lift. This patient also underwent a Level III chemical peel one year after face and eye lifting.
“Face lift” is the term commonly used to describe a surgical procedure better known in medical circles as “rhytidectomy” (removal of loose, wrinkled skin of the face and neck). The procedure is designed to re-create the firmer, smoother face of youth. However, not all face lifts are the same – nor should they be! The reason is: not all faces are the same. And, at different ages the same face is a different face.

Dr. McCollough’s system is comprised of five (5) general treatment plans:

| STAGE I (The Less Than Thirty Face Lift) | for the younger individual who has little or no loose skin and may require only liposuction to remove unwanted fat and bulges. Surgical fees generally run in the $2,500-$3,500 range. |
| STAGE II (The Thirty-Something Face Lift) | for the patient who is beginning to notice sagging of the brows and cheeks, but not the neck. Whenever sagging tissues are present, facial muscles and fat must be repositioned into their more youthful relationships. In such cases a small amount of loose skin is removed. Surgical fees generally range from $4,500-$5,500 |
| STAGE III (The Forty-Something Face Lift) | for the patient who exhibits sagging brows, cheeks and neck. Some of these patients may or may not need liposuction for contouring jowls and fullness under the chin. All, however require suspension techniques to muscles and fat. Surgical fees may range from $5,500-$6,500. |
| STAGE IV (The Fifty-Something Face Lift) | for the patient with generalized facial and neck sagging, with – or without – jowls and wrinkles around the mouth. With more obvious muscle, fat, and skin laxity, more suspension of these structures is required. Surgical fees range between $6,500-$8,000. |
| STAGE V (The Sixty-Plus Face Lift) | for the patient with advanced aging, coupled with sagging of all facial areas, including the forehead, brows, cheeks, and neck. At this stage in the aging process, deep folds develop in the groove between the nose and face, jowls droop below the jaw line, and the muscles of the neck often produce string-like bands that run vertically from the chin to the upper chest. Many of these patients are also beginning to exhibit wrinkles and blemishes over most of the face. In these more advanced cases, surgical fees generally range from $8,000-$9,000. |

This patient exhibited the early signs of aging that required a Stage III face lift and a Stage III Blepharoplasty, giving her a “rested,” natural appearance.
This woman underwent a Stage II face lift, upper and lower lid Blepharoplasty. Liposuction is generally performed with face lifting to remove “jowls” and fatty tissues under the chin.

The improvement in this patient was accomplished by a Stage III forehead lift, a cheek-neck lift and upper and lower lid Blepharoplasty.

“Lifting” surgery repositions drooping tissues to their original, youthful positions.
We will advise you in your particular situation. Most people seeking “neck lifts” require some lifting of the cheeks in order to avoid “puckering” of the skin around the ears.

Face-lifting may be done for one or two reasons: to help prevent the advancement of aging, i.e., to help relatively young individuals (about 40 or less) to appear to stay young. The second reason is to assist one who is already wrinkled or whose skin sags to appear younger, fresher and more rested—to help one recapture the appearance once enjoyed.

Naturally, everyone contemplating the operation is interested in how much improvement they can expect … and for what duration. The amount of improvement depends on the degree of wrinkling and sagging present; if it is excessive, the results may be dramatic; if sagging is occurring prematurely and the operation is being done to attempt to keep the patient looking young, the improvement may be more subtle. Remarks may be made that the skin appears “less tired” and the face “looks more alive, rested and fresher.” Some people look as though they have “lost weight” because the heaviness along the jaw line and in the neck is improved.

How Long Does It Last?
The duration of the results achieved with a face and neck lift cannot always be accurately predicted. If wrinkling and/or sagging is severe it will obviously take years before the condition becomes as bad as it was before surgery. If the natural degenerative process in the skin is occurring rapidly (as in sun-damaged skin), wrinkling and sagging will also accumulate more rapidly. This is precisely when “tuck-up” or “spot-welding” procedures are helpful.

Liposuction can remove unwanted fat from the neck and jaw line. When combined with tightening sagging muscles and skin in patients undergoing facial plastic surgery, liposuction can
improve the results of most cases by as much as 20-25 percent. A face that is simply “fat” however, may be improved, but for a short time.

Patients usually look like they did 10-15 years earlier. No operation can permanently prevent aging but the individual should never appear as old as he/she might have if the operation had not been done.

Any sagging noticed after a face lift is a result of the continuation of the aging process. When sagging becomes a problem again, a “tuck-up” procedure can be done which may provide dramatic and long-lasting improvement (see section on “Facial Tuck Up”). For the best results every patient should be evaluated within a year or two following surgery. A “tuck-up” may or may not be considered at this time. Claims that some surgeon’s facelifts, “last longer” should be viewed with skepticism. “Over-doing” surgery in an attempt to have a “tight” appearance for a longer time is fraught with problems.

A face lift simply removes the slack which occurred due to the breaking down of the elastic tissues in the skin as part of the aging process; however, like any material that has elasticity, a second tightening may be helpful. The foundation created by the initial face lift creates the desired situation for a “tuck-up.” It is not necessary, however, to have additional cosmetic surgery. The “tuck-up” is simply part of a “maintenance program.”

One benefit Dr. McCollough offers is that once he has performed a face lift on a patient, subsequent “tucks” are performed at a fraction of the current fee for the same procedure, even if years have passed since the first surgery. This special benefit is offered to encourage his patients to maintain a more youthful appearance throughout life.

THE AGING PROCESS
(Life’s conveyor belt of time)

This drawing demonstrates the changes that occur in the same face at ten (10) year intervals. Surgery can generally move one back one step, sometimes more, depending upon which procedures are performed.

IN A NUTSHELL...
A face lift generally helps turn back the clock about 10 years in most patients. It does not stop the ticking. The excess skin and fat in the neck and lower jaw is removed at surgery. Any slack seen in the post-operative period is a result of continued aging and breaking down of the skin that remains. Had the surgery not been performed, the patient would have the “new” sags on top of the “old” sags which were removed at surgery. Tuck-ups help maintain a youthful appearance in the patient who chooses to have additional surgery. Tuck-ups are generally less extensive ... and less expensive ... and quite effective.
Who Should Have a Face Lift?
Men and women from all walks of life are having face-lifts; however, not everyone seeking rehabilitation of the aging skin of the face and neck is an acceptable candidate for surgery. Those with known serious medical problems are usually excluded. Patients who are obese or who have a short, thick, neck have little chance for a worthwhile result. The severe “turkey gobbler” deformity which occurs in the neck of some individuals may best be corrected by a direct excision in the midline of the neck under the chin. Finally, those with unrealistic expectations are not accepted.

Nicotine interferes with blood flow through the skin of the face, delays healing and tends to increase the incidence of complications. Please notify us of any tobacco use or smoking cessation aids you may be using. Doing so will be in your best interest.

About The Surgery
Technically, the face lift operation consists of repositioning and supporting the sagging skin and the underlying tissues of the face and removing the excess skin and fat.

The scars in the hair and around the ear may be camouflaged with the adjacent hair or by the natural creases and folds of the ears. On rare occasions, there may be some thinning of the hair around the incision line; if this occurs, the area can be covered by combing adjacent hair over it, or by a minor “touch-up” procedure. However, we employ techniques designed to protect and preserve hair and to minimize scarring.

If a temporal or forehead lift is performed, the hairline may be altered; however, the incisions are tailored to minimize hairline alterations. The operation is “customized” to fit the needs and desires of each patient seeking surgery.

During preparation for surgery, we do not shave the hair in the temporal and forehead regions or behind the ear. Because we close those incisions made in the scalp with small metal clips, we have not found it necessary to shave the hair. Obviously the fact that one has had surgery is easier to camouflage when hair shaving is avoided. Another distinct advantage of the metal clip closure is that patients may wash their hair the next day after surgery. As a matter of fact, we recommend daily shampoos following face lift surgery.

Some degree of tightness, numbness or weakness of surrounding tissues is expected following surgery. It is usually temporary, disappearing as healing progresses.

The operation may be done either under “twilight” anesthesia or general anesthesia.

More than 90% of the face-lifts we perform are done in outpatient facilities, but even if the surgery is performed in the hospital, patients are usually discharged in one (1) or two (2) days. Patients from out of town should plan to stay in the Gulf Coast area for approximately one week, either with friends, at a hotel, or in one of the villas on the Institute’s campus. We will help you make these arrangements if you so desire.

If the surgery is performed in the Clinic, the total cost is considerably less when compared to hospital based surgery. These arrangements will be discussed during the consultation.

A turban-type head bandage is worn the night following surgery, but it is generally removed the next morning. The face may be swollen and some discoloration may be present. This discoloration usually fades away within about 10-14 days. Patients can return to most of their “normal routine” within two (2) weeks. But the face and neck may feel “tight” and movement will be restricted. This is to be expected as long as the tissues are swollen.
The patient returns to the Clinic in about a week to have the sutures and clips removed. Makeup may be worn by seven (7) to ten (10) days and he/she should be able to return to work and carefully drive an automobile in about two (2) weeks. **Patients must not pull against tightness, lie on their sides or engage in heavy lifting during this time.** Doing so can interfere with healing and lead to less than favorable results. For best results and better scars these activities should be avoided for at least 6 weeks following surgery.

A Stage IV face lift, Blepharoplasty (eyelids) and skin resurfacing around the mouth can move one back a step on the conveyor belt of time. The goal is to leave the patient with a natural "un-operated" appearance.

Preoperative photograph of a lady with sagging facial and neck tissues (Left). Two weeks after a Stage IV face lift the patient is photographed following a professional make-up session with one of our aestheticians (Right)
Behind the ear the incisions in both men and women are similar. They are usually camouflaged by the natural creases and by the hair.

We generally recommend forehead lifts (a) in women and “direct” brow lifts (b) in men. “Incisions at the edge of the hair (c) are recommended for patients with receding hairlines.

This photograph demonstrates the usual location of the incisions for a face lift in a woman. They are designed to be camouflaged by the hair and the natural creases around the ear. (The dotted lines indicate the placement of the incisions behind the ear, see below.)

This photograph demonstrates the typical incisions for a face lift in a man. The pattern of beard growth dictates that the incisions differ from those made in women.