WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Face & Neck Lift Aftercare

Detailed aftercare for facelift and necklift, including bandage care, elevated sleeping, and swelling timeline.

Typical recovery: 2–3 weeks initial recovery; 3–6 months for final refinement · Reviewed 4 July 2026 · Version 1.0

When to get help — your traffic light guide

RED

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have:

These can be life-threatening. Do not wait to call the hospital first.

- Sudden severe swelling on one side of face/neck
- Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- Heavy bleeding that won't stop
- Severe chest pain or shortness of breath (possible blood clot)
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

Contact us now — do not wait — if you have:

- High fever (over 38°C) with severe pain

Office hours (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm): 0131 376 3785

Evenings and weekends during your early recovery: Out-of-Hours Nurse Advice Line 07405322689 — our nurse can advise you, contact your surgeon, or direct you to NHS services.

After your early recovery period: call the hospital in office hours, or NHS 24 on 111.

Had your surgery at Spire Shawfair Park (overnight stay)? Contact Spire directly using the number on your discharge paperwork — not the Waterfront advice line.

GREEN

Tell us at your next appointment:

Anything else that is niggling or worrying you — no concern is too small. Mention it at your next appointment, or call us during office hours.

Related Information Leaflets

Separate leaflets about the procedure itself — not the aftercare instructions above. Tap a title to download, or find them all on your procedure page in the portal.

- Facelift Scars — What to Expect (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/facelift-scars-info.pdf)
- Facelift & Neck Lift — Patient Leaflet (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/facelift_and_necklift_patient_leaflet.pdf)

Post-Operative Checklist

- Bandages in place and kept dry
- Cool (not iced) compresses can be helpful in the first 48 hours — never apply ice directly to numb skin
- Many patients find it comfortable to sleep with the head raised (extra pillows or a recliner) for the first week or two — it helps swelling settle and keeps pressure off the incisions
- Follow-up appointment card received
- Make sure you have your painkillers — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you
- Emergency numbers saved

Wound Care

- Your bandage is changed to a lighter one the day after surgery (or before discharge if you go home the same day)
- You can remove the lighter bandage yourself after 48 hours
- Once the lighter bandage is off (around day 2–3), apply the chloramphenicol ointment you have been given along the suture lines as directed
- If you did NOT have eyelid surgery at the same time: once the bandage is off you can shower and wash your hair and the suture lines with a mild shampoo
- If you had eyelid surgery too: keep the eye area dry until the first sutures are removed (around 1 week) — otherwise the steristrips may come off
- No makeup on incisions until cleared

Pain Management

- Regular painkillers first few days
- Cool compresses can be helpful in the first 48 hours. The skin is numb after a facelift, so never apply ice directly to it — you won't feel if it's too cold

Activity Restrictions

- Avoid bending/straining first week
- Light walks only
- No strenuous exercise 2–3 weeks

Before You Go Home

Before you leave, the nurse looking after you will make sure you have everything you need, including:

- Bandage secure and kept dry
- Head-raised sleeping setup if comfortable (extra pillows or a recliner)
- Your painkillers — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you
- Follow-up appointment scheduled
- Plan for sun protection on scars

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Immediate Recovery

Bandages on; elevated sleeping; cold compresses

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Swelling and bruising around face/neck
- Tightness or numbness
- Drainage from small tubes (if used)

CARE ROUTINE

- Keep bandages in place and dry
- Sleeping with the head raised is comfortable for most people at this stage

- Cool (not iced) compresses can be helpful in the first 48 hours — nothing icy on numb skin
- Short walks; avoid bending/straining

COMFORT

- Regular painkillers; avoid aspirin unless prescribed

Week 1 — Early Healing

Swelling/bruise peak then improve; suture removal starts

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Bruising peak then starts improving
- Tightness reduces

CARE ROUTINE

- First clinic review for bandage/suture removal
- Gentle face/neck hygiene as instructed
- Sleep with the head raised if you find it comfortable

COMFORT

- Lighter analgesia as needed

Week 2 — Visible Improvement

Bruising fades; social downtime lessens

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Bruising largely resolved
- Swelling improved

CARE ROUTINE

- Scar care with silicone gel/tape
- Light activities; avoid heavy lifting

COMFORT

- Minimal discomfort

Weeks 3–4 — Activity Increase

Light exercise; scar care

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Facial movement more comfortable

CARE ROUTINE

- Light exercise; avoid high impact
- Sun protection and continued scar care

COMFORT

- None or rare

Months 2–3 — Refinement

Swelling minimal; results refined

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Contours refined
- Scars maturing

CARE ROUTINE

- Resume normal routine
- Continue SPF on scars

COMFORT

- No pain expected

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 — nurse appointment — Wound check, dressing care and any suture removal; a chance to ask questions about your recovery.

Further nurse reviews — as needed — You are likely to have further nurse reviews — wound healing after this procedure often benefits from more than one visit. The nurses will arrange these with you and will discharge you from nurse-led care once they are happy your wounds have healed.

Around 6 months — surgeon review (final follow-up) — Your surgeon will usually see you at around 6 months to assess your final result. Your surgeon is always available to review you sooner if required, and in some circumstances may wish to see you before your final follow-up.

Your appointment schedule may vary. Always follow the specific dates and times given in your appointment card. Contact us if you need to reschedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

When can I wash my hair?
Once you have removed the lighter bandage yourself (after 48 hours), you can shower and wash your hair and the suture lines with a mild shampoo. If you had eyelid surgery at the same time, keep the eye area dry until the first sutures are removed (around 1 week).

When can I wear makeup?

On unaffected areas of the face, as soon as you feel ready. Over the incisions, wait until they are checked at your clinic review and the sutures are out — typically around 2 weeks.

Is numbness of my cheeks and neck normal?

Yes. Areas of the face and neck are usually numb after a facelift and sensation returns gradually over weeks to months. Because of this numbness, never apply ice directly to the skin.

When will I feel comfortable being seen socially?

Most bruising has faded by around 2 weeks and many patients feel comfortable in company then, sometimes with light makeup. Swelling continues to refine for 2–3 months.