

A PATIENT GUIDE TO RECOVERY

Your *Post-Op* *Booklet*

*Everything you need to feel prepared, supported, and confident
— before, during, and after the Vertical Restore®.*

//

*I know that it's not aging
that is painful, but looking
in the mirror and feeling
a deep disconnect between
the person you see and how
you actually feel inside.*

- DR. AMIR KARAM

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A guide to *your* recovery.

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01 SECTION ONE

A letter *from* Dr. Karam.

*A personal welcome from the surgeon who
will be guiding you through every phase of
this process.*

Dear Patient,

Making the decision to undergo facial rejuvenation surgery is not a small one. It reflects something deeper than appearance. It reflects a desire to feel aligned again—to look in the mirror and see a version of yourself that matches how you feel inside.

I want to acknowledge that.

And I want to congratulate you on taking this step.

Over more than two decades in facial plastic surgery, I've had the privilege of working with thousands of patients, and one theme is consistent:

People are not looking to become someone else. They want to look like themselves—just refreshed, more rested, and more in line with how they feel.

That is the foundation of everything I do.

The approach used in your procedure is designed specifically to restore your natural facial structure in a way that preserves your identity. Nothing about this process is meant to create a different face. The goal is familiarity, balance, and a result that feels natural—not only to you, but to the people who know you best.

As you move forward, it's important to understand that surgery is only one part of the journey.

There is a process—before, during, and after—and each phase plays an important role in achieving the best possible outcome. This booklet is designed to guide you through that process so that you feel informed, prepared, and confident every step of the way.

You may feel a mix of excitement and uncertainty right now. That's completely normal.

My role—and my team's role—is to make sure you feel supported, informed, and cared for throughout this entire experience.

You are not navigating this alone.

And most importantly, you can feel confident that the goal is simple and clear: to help you look as young as you feel—while always looking like yourself.

With care,

Dr. Amir M. Karam

Dr. Amir Karam, M.D.

FOUNDER

02 SECTION TWO

Understanding Your Procedure.

*Understanding what is being done—and
why—is one of the most important ways to
feel confident moving forward.*

Understanding Your Procedure.



Understanding what is being done—and why—is one of the most important ways to feel confident moving forward.

Facial rejuvenation is best understood through a simple principle:

restore—not change.

As we age, the face does not just develop lines or wrinkles. The deeper structural layers—particularly the fascia, ligaments, and fat—begin to shift, descend, and lose their youthful position.

These changes are what lead to:

- sagging through the midface
- heaviness along the jawline
- loss of definition in the neck
- and a general change in facial shape over time

The goal of your procedure is to address these structural changes directly.

Using a deep plane approach and vertical vector elevation, the underlying facial layers are carefully released and repositioned back toward their more youthful position.

Importantly, this is done in a way that:

- lifts the face in the same direction it naturally ages
- avoids tension on the skin
- and preserves normal facial movement and expression

This allows for a result that looks:

- natural
- balanced
- and familiar

—not tight, pulled, or artificial.

Understanding Your Procedure.



Another key concept to understand is that the face is treated as a whole.

Rather than addressing isolated areas, the procedure restores continuity from:

- the lateral brow
- through the midface
- along the jawline
- and into the neck

This comprehensive approach is what allows for a more harmonious and complete rejuvenation.

Because the correction occurs at the level of the deeper structures—not just the surface—the results are not only more natural, but also more durable.

Aging does not stop. However, after surgery, it continues from a more youthful starting point and tends to progress more gradually over time.

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

If you take one idea from this section, it's this:

This procedure is not about changing how you look.

It's about restoring how you used to look—naturally.

03 SECTION THREE

Your Procedures Explained.

Facial rejuvenation often involves addressing multiple components of aging at the same time.

SECTION 3

Your Procedures Explained.



Facial rejuvenation often involves addressing multiple components of aging at the same time.

Each procedure plays a specific role in restoring a natural, balanced result.

Vertical Restore®

The Vertical Restore® addresses the underlying structural changes of the face that occur with aging.

Over time, the deeper layers of the face descend, leading to:

- brow descent
- midface flattening
- jawline softening
- neck laxity

This procedure restores the lateral brow, midface, jawline, and neck in a single operation by repositioning the deeper fascial layers back to their more youthful position.

It is performed using a deep plane approach with vertical vector elevation, allowing the face to be lifted in the same direction it naturally ages.

The goal is not to create tension or a pulled appearance, but to:

- restore natural contours
- preserve expression
- maintain your identity

SECTION 3

Your Procedures Explained.



Fat Transfer (Face)

Fat transfer is used to restore volume that has been lost over time.

Aging leads to deflation in areas such as:

- under the eyes
- above the eyes
- the temples
- around the mouth and lips

By carefully placing your own natural tissue, we can:

- soften transitions
- improve contour
- restore balance

Fat is used selectively and conservatively—rarely in the cheeks—to maintain a natural appearance.

Fat Transfer (Hands)

The hands often age alongside the face, developing a bony or skeletonized appearance as volume is lost.

Fat transfer to the hands restores this lost volume, helping to:

- soften the appearance of veins and tendons
- improve skin fullness
- create a more youthful overall appearance

Treating the hands helps ensure that the face and hands remain in harmony, so the hands do not give away age after facial rejuvenation.

SECTION 3

Your Procedures Explained.



Upper Blepharoplasty (Upper Eyelids)

This procedure addresses excess skin and heaviness of the upper eyelids.

It can improve:

- a tired or heavy appearance
- eyelid contour
- overall eye openness

The result is a more refreshed, natural look while preserving the normal shape of the eyelid.

Lower Blepharoplasty (Lower Eyelids)

Lower eyelid surgery addresses:

- under-eye puffiness and bags
- excess skin
- contour irregularities

When fat is present, it is typically removed through a transconjunctival approach (from inside the eyelid), avoiding an external incision.

In most cases, a skin pinch technique is also performed to remove excess skin beneath the eyes.

The goal is a smooth, natural transition from the lower eyelid to the cheek—without hollowing or overcorrection.

SECTION 3

Your Procedures Explained.



Lip Lift

A lip lift shortens the distance between the nose and upper lip, which naturally lengthens with age.

This can:

- increase upper tooth show
- improve lip shape
- enhance overall facial balance

The result is a more youthful, defined upper lip without adding volume.

Contour Laser (Skin Resurfacing)

Laser resurfacing improves the quality of the skin.

It helps address:

- fine lines
- texture
- pigmentation
- overall tone

This complements the structural improvements from surgery by enhancing the appearance of the skin.

A FINAL PERSPECTIVE

Each of these procedures addresses a different component of aging.

When performed together, they create a result that is:

- balanced
- natural
- and aligned with how you see yourself

04 SECTION FOUR

Realistic Expectations.

Understanding what surgery can—and cannot—achieve is one of the most important parts of this process.

SECTION 4

Realistic Expectations.



Understanding what surgery can—and cannot—achieve is one of the most important parts of this process. There are two fundamental outcomes that I can reliably deliver with the Vertical Restore® and the procedures that accompany it.

Improvement in Facial Shape

The first expectation is that there will be a clear improvement in the shape of your face, resulting in a more youthful appearance.

This comes from the combination of:

- Vertical Restore®
- Fat transfer
- and any additional procedures performed

By repositioning the deeper structures of the face, we restore a more youthful contour and balance.

The degree of change, however, depends on where you are starting.

- Patients with more advanced aging—greater laxity and more structural change—tend to see a more dramatic transformation
- Patients who are earlier in the aging process will still see improvement, but it may be more subtle

In those cases, the benefit is often more about long-term preservation and slowing the aging process, rather than a dramatic before-and-after change.

Regardless of where you start, there will be positive improvement—but the magnitude of that improvement is individualized.

SECTION 4

Realistic Expectations.



It's also important to understand that surgery addresses structure, not skin quality.

If there is:

- significant sun damage
- deep lines and wrinkles
- thinning or crepey skin those changes may still be present to some degree after surgery.

We reposition the deeper tissues—but we do not change the intrinsic quality of the skin.

SECTION 4

Realistic Expectations.



A Natural, Undetectable Result

The second expectation—and the one that is both the most important and the most difficult to achieve—is this:

you will look rejuvenated without looking like you've had surgery.

You will not look like a different person.

Your natural facial shape will be preserved.

In both public and private settings, the goal is that:

no one will suspect that you've had surgery.

This is one of the rarest outcomes in facial rejuvenation—and it is one that I consistently and reliably achieve.

WHAT I CANNOT PROMISE

I cannot promise perfection.

I cannot promise that every line, wrinkle, or asymmetry will be gone.

And I cannot correct what is not correctable with surgery.

The Vertical Restore® is a powerful deep plane procedure that repositions the face as far back toward its youthful position as anatomy allows.

Where things settle, they settle.

SECTION 4

Realistic Expectations.



Revisions and Touch-Ups

The need for revision or additional surgery is extremely uncommon.

We do not routinely perform touch-ups or secondary procedures unless there is a true issue, such as:

- a healing-related concern
- or a structural irregularity that warrants correction

In many cases, attempting to "perfect" small details can create more problems than it solves.

Healing, Variability & Surgical Outcomes

Surgery is both precise and predictable—but it is not absolute.

No surgeon can guarantee a specific aesthetic outcome.

Every procedure is performed with a clear plan, a defined technique, and a high level of consistency. But once surgery is complete, the final result is influenced by something we do not control:

your individual biology and how your body heals.

Even when the same procedure is performed in the same way, outcomes can vary based on:

- tissue quality
- skin characteristics
- underlying anatomy
- and individual healing response

This is true across all areas of surgery.

In the vast majority of cases, outcomes are excellent.

However, it's important to understand that:

- results are not identical from person to person
- and no outcome can be guaranteed with absolute precision

SECTION 4

Realistic Expectations.



TIME AS A CRITICAL FACTOR

Healing is not immediate—and it is not always linear.

Many aspects of the result:

- swelling
- tissue settling
- minor irregularities continue to improve over weeks to months, and in some cases up to a year or longer.

For this reason, early concerns are often resolved with time and observation, rather than intervention.

The Right Mindset

It's important that you enter this process with the right expectations.

If you are seeking:

- meaningful improvement
- a natural, undetectable result
- and a long-term slowing of the aging process then this procedure is well aligned.

If, however, your expectation is perfection—or the complete elimination of every imperfection—this is not a realistic starting point and may lead to disappointment.

FINAL THOUGHT

Patients who do best with this procedure understand both:

- the power of what surgery can achieve
- and the limits of what it cannot

Clear communication is essential.

If you have specific concerns or questions, they should always be discussed prior to surgery so that expectations are fully aligned.

At the end of the day, a successful outcome is defined by two things: a natural result and a meaningful improvement.

05 SECTION FIVE

Preparing Your Body for Surgery.

*to minimize bleeding, optimize healing, and
create the safest possible environment for
your surgery.*

SECTION 5

Preparing Your Body for Surgery.



The goal of this section is simple:

to minimize bleeding, optimize healing, and create the safest possible environment for your surgery.

Two factors matter most:

- bleeding risk
- blood pressure control

Everything below is designed around those principles.

NICOTINE – STRICTLY AVOID

Nicotine significantly impairs blood flow to the skin and can interfere with healing.

You must avoid all nicotine products for at least 2 months before and after surgery, including:

- cigarettes
- vaping
- nicotine patches or gum
- secondhand smoke exposure

This is not optional.

Even small amounts can negatively affect healing and compromise your result.

SECTION 5

Preparing Your Body for Surgery.





Medications & Supplements That Increase Bleeding

Certain medications and supplements can increase bleeding during and after surgery.

These must be stopped at least 2 weeks prior to surgery, unless otherwise directed.

This includes (but is not limited to):

<p> MEDICATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aspirin ■ Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) ■ Naproxen (Aleve) ■ Other anti-inflammatory medications 	<p> SUPPLEMENTS & NATURAL PRODUCTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fish oil / Omega-3 ■ Vitamin E ■ Ginkgo biloba ■ Garlic supplements ■ Ginseng ■ St. John's Wort ■ Turmeric / curcumin ■ Green tea extract
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If you are unsure about a medication or supplement, please ask.

SECTION 5

Preparing Your Body for Surgery.



Arnica & Bromelain

We recommend starting Arnica and Bromelain several days before surgery and continuing during the early recovery period.

These supplements are commonly used to help:

- reduce bruising
- minimize swelling

While individual responses can vary, some clinical evidence suggests they may support the body's natural healing process.

They are used as an adjunct—not a replacement—for proper surgical technique and post-operative care.

Alcohol

Alcohol affects both bleeding and blood pressure.

Avoid alcohol for at least:

- 2 weeks before surgery
- 2 weeks after surgery

Blood Pressure Control

Elevated blood pressure increases the risk of bleeding (hematoma), particularly in the early recovery period.

To help maintain stable blood pressure:

- avoid unnecessary stress
- follow all medication instructions
- limit caffeine intake
- prioritize rest and sleep

After surgery, avoiding strain and following activity restrictions is equally important.

SECTION 5

Preparing Your Body for Surgery.



General Health Preparation

In the weeks leading up to surgery:

- stay well hydrated
- eat a balanced, nutrient-rich diet
- prioritize sleep and recovery
- avoid illness or exposure to infection when possible

A KEY PRINCIPLE

Most complications in facial surgery are related to:

- bleeding
- or impaired healing

The steps above are not arbitrary—they are directly tied to minimizing those risks.

FINAL THOUGHT

Preparation is part of the procedure.

By following these guidelines carefully, you are actively contributing to:

- a safer surgery
- a smoother recovery
- and a better overall result

06 SECTION SIX

Preoperative Checklist & Surgical Day Preparation.

This section is designed to ensure that everything is in place before your procedure so that your surgical day is smooth, safe, and stress-free.

SECTION 6

Preoperative Checklist & Surgical Day Preparation.



This section ensures everything is in place before your procedure so your surgical day is smooth, safe, and stress-free. By the time you arrive, your only focus should be to relax and feel prepared.

EATING & DRINKING (NPO GUIDELINES)

For your safety, you will be given specific instructions regarding eating and drinking prior to surgery. In general:

- For IV sedation: nothing by mouth for at least 6 hours before surgery
- For general anesthesia: nothing by mouth for at least 8 hours before surgery

This includes food, liquids, and gum unless otherwise instructed. These guidelines are essential to reduce the risk of complications related to sedation or anesthesia —always follow the exact instructions provided by your perioperative nurse.

Day of Surgery Preparation

To ensure a safe and efficient experience, please follow these guidelines:

- Do not wear makeup, lotions, or skincare products
- Remove all jewelry and leave valuables at home
- Remove all nail polish (at least one finger must be clear)
- Remove eyelash extensions
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing that does not go over your head

Medications on the Day

MEDICATION	TIMING	HOW
Ativan (<i>lorazepam</i>)	~1 hr before	Sip of water
Zofran (<i>ondansetron</i>)	~1 hr before	Sublingual

Take only a small sip of water to swallow medications, and allow the Zofran to dissolve. If you are undergoing general anesthesia or have any medication allergies, your instructions may differ— please confirm all medication instructions with your perioperative nurse.

SECTION 6

Preoperative Checklist & Surgical Day Preparation.



Transportation & Support

For your safety, you must have:

- a responsible adult to take you home after surgery
- someone available to assist you for at least the first 24–72 hours

If needed, a professional caregiving service can be arranged.

This is a required part of your surgical plan, not optional.

Final Surgical Planning & Preoperative Visit

Depending on your schedule and where you are traveling from, your preoperative visit will occur either:

- the day before surgery, or
- the morning of surgery

For local and regional patients, this visit can be scheduled at a time that is most convenient.

This is an important part of the process.

During this visit, we will:

- review your surgical plan in detail
- confirm the procedures we are performing
- answer any final questions
- ensure everything is fully aligned before moving forward

If this is our first time meeting in person, this is also when I perform a comprehensive in-person evaluation.

SECTION 6

Preoperative Checklist & Surgical Day Preparation.



Additional Procedures (In-Person Assessment)

Certain procedures are best evaluated in person, including:

- upper blepharoplasty
- lower blepharoplasty
- lip lift
- hand fat transfer
- laser resurfacing

It is often easier—and more appropriate—to assess these areas during an in-person exam.

For this reason, it is very common for patients—especially those traveling—to initially be scheduled for:

- Vertical Restore®
- and facial fat transfer and then decide to add additional procedures after the in-person evaluation.

Planning Ahead

If you are interested in any of these additional procedures, it is important to:

- discuss them with your Patient Care Coordinator (PCC) ahead of your visit
- review pricing and logistics in advance
- review the informed consent documents

If you decide to move forward, your PCC will coordinate adding those procedures to your surgical plan.

SECTION 6

Preoperative Checklist & Surgical Day Preparation.



Preparing Your Recovery Environment

Especially for patients traveling from out of town, it is important to plan ahead:

- arrange a comfortable place to recover (home, hotel, or recovery retreat)
- have all necessary supplies ready
- set up your space so that everything you need is within easy reach

The goal is to eliminate unnecessary effort after surgery.

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

Preparation removes stress.

When everything is set up ahead of time, your only job after surgery becomes:

rest, recover, and trust the process.

07 SECTION SEVEN

Your Surgical Journey.

*Understanding what to expect—step by step
—helps remove uncertainty and allows you
to approach your surgery with confidence.*

SECTION 7

Your Surgical Journey.



Understanding what to expect—step by step—helps remove uncertainty and allows you to approach your surgery with confidence. While every patient is unique, the overall process is very consistent.

DAY OF
Surgery

On the day of your procedure, our focus is on creating a calm, controlled, and comfortable experience. Your surgery is typically performed using local anesthesia with IV sedation, which allows you to remain relaxed while avoiding many of the added risks associated with general anesthesia.

When you arrive:

- you will be welcomed and prepared by the team
- final planning and markings will be completed
- everything will be reviewed one last time to ensure full alignment

The procedure is then performed with precision and attention to detail.

IMMEDIATELY
After

After your procedure, you will spend a short period in recovery before being discharged the same day to your home, hotel, or recovery retreat.

At this stage, your focus should be simple: rest, hydration, and allowing your body to begin healing.

FIRST
24 – 48h

This is the most intensive phase of early recovery. It is completely normal to experience:

- swelling
- tightness
- a sensation of pressure or fullness

Pain is typically minimal.

Most patients do very well with Tylenol alone, although prescription medication is available if needed.

During this time, you should:

- keep your head elevated
- limit activity
- follow all post-operative instructions carefully

DAYS
3 – 6

Swelling typically peaks between days 3–6. This is often the most challenging phase—both physically and emotionally.

You may notice:

- increased facial fullness
- tightness
- temporary asymmetry

This is expected, temporary, and part of the normal healing process. None of what you are seeing during this phase reflects your final result.

DAYS
6 – 7

Around days 6–7, most patients experience a noticeable shift. Swelling begins to decrease, and you start to feel like you are moving in the right direction—an important psychological turning point in recovery.

SECTION 7

Your Surgical Journey.



FIRST

Week

During the first week:

- sutures are typically removed
- drains (if used) are removed within 3–5 days
- external compression sutures are removed within a similar timeframe

By the end of the first week:

- you will begin to see meaningful improvement
- you will feel more comfortable and mobile

WEEKS

2 — 4

By the end of the first 2–4 weeks, the majority of the more noticeable (“deforming”) swelling has resolved.

At this stage:

- you will look significantly improved
- bruising has typically resolved
- you will begin to feel comfortable in social settings

That said, it is completely normal for residual swelling to persist, most commonly:

- in the upper cheek
- along the jawline
- underneath the chin and neck

This swelling is subtle and continues to improve gradually over time.

MONTHS

2+

Healing continues well beyond the first few weeks.

Over time:

- swelling continues to resolve
- tissues soften and settle
- your natural result gradually reveals itself

Final refinement can take several months—and in some cases up to a year or longer.

SECTION 7

Your Surgical Journey.



A KEY PERSPECTIVE

The most important thing to keep in mind:

what you are seeing early on is not your result.

You are seeing the process of getting there.

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

If you remember one thing during recovery, it's this:

You are not evaluating your result—you are moving through the process of healing.

Trusting the Process

Recovery is not a single moment—it is a progression.

There will be phases where:

- things feel uncertain
- things may not look the way you expected

That does not mean something is wrong.

It means your body is healing.

Each stage has a purpose:

- swelling
- tightness
- temporary asymmetry

These are not problems—they are part of the process.

Moving Forward

Each phase builds on the last.

And throughout that process, our team is here to guide you, answer questions, and ensure that everything is progressing exactly as expected.

08 SECTION EIGHT

What to Expect After Surgery.

While recovery is a process that unfolds over time, there are consistent patterns that most patients experience.

SECTION 8

What to Expect After Surgery.



While recovery is a process that unfolds over time, there are consistent patterns that most patients experience. Understanding these patterns helps you interpret what you're seeing and feel more confident as you heal.

Swelling

Swelling is the most noticeable part of early recovery and follows a predictable course:

- Days 2–6: swelling peaks
- Days 6–7: swelling begins to improve
- Weeks 2–4: most visible swelling resolves

At this stage, the majority of the more noticeable ("deforming") swelling has improved.

It is completely normal, however, for residual swelling to persist—most commonly:

- in the upper cheek
- along the jawline
- underneath the chin and neck

This swelling is subtle and continues to improve gradually over time.

Bruising

Bruising is typically mild to moderate and follows a consistent pattern:

- most visible in the first several days
- begins to fade within the first week
- largely resolves within 1–2 weeks

SECTION 8

What to Expect After Surgery.



Tightness and Sensation

It is normal to experience:

- tightness
- a sense of fullness or pressure
- temporary numbness in certain areas

These sensations are part of the normal healing process and improve gradually over time.

Numbness can take several months—and in some cases up to a year—to fully resolve.

Asymmetry During Healing

Temporary asymmetry is common and expected.

This occurs because:

- swelling does not resolve evenly
- different areas of the face heal at different rates

As healing progresses and swelling decreases, symmetry improves naturally.

SECTION 8

What to Expect After Surgery.



Incision Healing Timeline

Incisions go through predictable phases:

- Early phase (2–4 months): may appear pink, slightly firm, or more noticeable
- Maturation phase (up to 1 year or longer): gradually soften, fade, and blend into surrounding skin

Patience during this phase is important, as scar improvement is gradual.

The Bigger Picture Most of the visible recovery happens in the first few weeks—but healing continues well beyond that.

Over time:

- swelling resolves
- tissues soften
- your natural result becomes more refined

A KEY REMINDER

If something feels unfamiliar during recovery, that does not mean it is abnormal.

In most cases, it reflects normal healing.

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

Recovery is not about watching for a final result day by day.

It's about allowing the process to unfold.

What you see early is temporary.

What you are moving toward is lasting.

09 SECTION NINE

Incisions & Scar Healing.

*Understanding where incisions are placed—
and how they heal—is an important part of
preparing for surgery.*

SECTION 9

Incisions & Scar Healing.



Understanding where incisions are placed—and how they heal—is an important part of preparing for surgery.

The goal is always the same:

to place incisions in a way that allows for optimal surgical correction while keeping them as concealed and natural as possible.

Incision Design & Placement

The Vertical Restore® uses a carefully designed incision pattern that allows for the removal of excess skin after the deeper structures of the face have been repositioned.

Because the procedure restores the face using a vertical vector, addressing the:

- lateral brow
- midface
- jawline
- and neck as one unit, the incision is designed to support that movement while remaining well concealed.

The incision typically:

- begins along the temporal hairline
- extends down along the sideburn area
- continues in front of the ear within a natural crease (preauricular area)
- curves around the ear in a way that remains well camouflaged
- passes behind the ear
- and extends a short distance into the hairline

In cases where there is fullness beneath the chin, a small incision may also be placed within the submental crease (under the chin).

SECTION 9

Incisions & Scar Healing.



Preserving Natural Anatomy

A key goal of this design is to:

- preserve the natural hairline
- maintain the position of the sideburn
- avoid distortion of the ear

Because the deeper structures are lifted first, there is no tension placed on the skin itself.

This is critical, because tension is what typically leads to:

- widened scars
- visible distortion
- unnatural appearance

By avoiding tension, the incisions are able to heal more cleanly and naturally.

SECTION 9

Incisions & Scar Healing.



What to Expect with Scars

In most cases, scars heal as a very thin line, often in the range of 1–2 mm in thickness.

Over time, they become increasingly difficult to see.

That said, it is completely normal for scars to go through several phases:

- Early phase (approximately 2 weeks to 2 months): incisions may appear more pink or red
- Maturation phase (up to 1 year or longer): scars gradually soften, fade, and blend into the surrounding skin

These changes occur gradually, and patience during this process is important.

Natural Variability in Healing

Scars may heal slightly lighter or darker depending on:

- individual skin characteristics
- genetics
- and sun exposure

It's also important to understand that any incision in any surgical procedure results in a scar.

Our goal is always to optimize healing and achieve the most subtle result possible—but individual healing responses can vary.

Incisions & Scar Healing.



Factors That Can Affect Scar Healing

Certain factors can influence how scars mature, including:

- individual biology and healing response
- excessive sun exposure during the first year
- tension or irritation to the incision area

In rare cases, scars may become more prominent, including the development of hypertrophic scars.

The Role of Sun Protection

Sun exposure during the first year after surgery can significantly affect how scars heal and mature.

For this reason:

protecting your incisions from the sun is essential.

Proper sun protection helps:

- prevent discoloration
- support optimal scar healing
- improve long-term appearance

A FINAL PERSPECTIVE

Incisions are designed to be:

- well concealed
- tension-free
- and respectful of your natural anatomy

With proper healing and time, they typically become subtle and unobtrusive.

10 SECTION TEN

Emotional Expectations During Recovery.

While much of this guide focuses on the physical aspects of recovery, it's equally important to understand the emotional side of the process.

SECTION 10

Emotional Expectations During Recovery.



While much of this guide focuses on the physical aspects of recovery, it's equally important to understand the emotional side of the process.

This is something that is not talked about enough—but every patient experiences it to some degree.

The Early Phase

In the first several days—particularly around days 2 to 6—it is very common to feel:

- discouraged by swelling
- unsure about how things look
- concerned that something may not be right
- impatient to see the result

This is not only common—it is expected. You are seeing the peak of swelling, not the outcome of your procedure.

Why This Happens

Facial surgery is unique because the area that is healing is also the area you see every day.

Even normal healing changes—swelling, tightness, temporary asymmetry—can feel more significant than they actually are. Understanding this ahead of time allows you to interpret what you're seeing more accurately.

THE TURNING POINT

Around days 6 to 7, most patients begin to feel a shift:

- swelling starts to improve
- your appearance begins to feel more recognizable
- you start to feel like you are moving in the right direction

This is an important psychological turning point in recovery.

SECTION 10

Emotional Expectations During Recovery.



What to Keep in Mind

Early changes are temporary. Healing is progressive—not immediate. What you see in the first days does not reflect your final result.

Trusting the Process

One of the most important parts of recovery is understanding that healing happens in stages.

There will be moments—especially early on—where things may not look or feel the way you expected. That does not mean something is wrong. It means your body is healing.

Swelling, tightness, and temporary asymmetry are not problems—they are part of the process.

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

If you remember one thing during this phase, it's this:

You are not evaluating your result—you are moving through the process of healing.

Communication & Reassurance

You should always feel comfortable reaching out with any concern.

In most cases, what you will hear from us is reassurance—because the majority of what patients experience during recovery is normal and expected.

Time is the most important factor in the healing process.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Every patient moves through this phase.

As the swelling resolves and everything settles, what emerges is exactly what the procedure was designed to achieve: a natural, restored version of you.

11 SECTION ELEVEN

Maintaining Your Results.

*Facial rejuvenation is best understood
through two components:*

SECTION 11

Maintaining Your Results.



Facial rejuvenation is best understood through two components: shape and skin. A youthful face is defined by youthful facial structure and healthy, vibrant skin. Your surgery addressed the first.

Shape Has Been Restored

Aging changes the shape of the face over time due to shifts in the deeper structural layers—particularly the fascia, ligaments, and fat. These changes lead to sagging, heaviness, and loss of definition.

Through your procedure, these deeper structures were carefully repositioned and restored. Because this was performed using a deep plane, vertically oriented approach, the structural correction is foundational, durable, and long-lasting.

Aging does not stop—but after surgery, it continues from a more youthful starting point. You will continue to age, but more gradually and more gracefully than you would have otherwise. The impact of this procedure carries forward throughout your lifetime.

Skin Continues to Age

At the same time, a separate process is always occurring: the aging of the skin itself. This includes:

- fine lines and wrinkles
- pigmentation and uneven tone
- loss of hydration and glow
- changes in texture

Unlike structural aging, this is something you can actively influence on a daily basis—which is where your focus should be after surgery.

SECTION 11

Maintaining Your Results.



Where Your Focus Should Be

After surgery, your priority becomes clear: maintain and improve your skin. This is what allows your results to look their best—not just now, but for years to come.

The Core Maintenance Strategy

1. DAILY SUN PROTECTION

Sun exposure is the primary driver of skin aging.

Protecting your skin from UV damage is essential to preserving your results and preventing:

- pigmentation
- loss of collagen
- accelerated aging

2. THE KARAMMD TRIFECTA

The Trifecta was specifically developed to address the key biological processes of skin aging in a simple, effective way.

With consistent use, it helps:

- support collagen and firmness
- improve tone and pigmentation
- maintain hydration and skin quality

This is not about short-term improvement.

It is about long-term maintenance and continuous skin health.

SECTION 11

Maintaining Your Results.



A Simplified Approach

One of the biggest advantages you now have is clarity.

- The shape has been restored surgically
- The skin is maintained daily at home

There is no need for:

- complex, multi-step skincare routines
- frequent or aggressive treatments
- routine filler use

In some cases, small adjuncts such as Botox or microneedling (without radiofrequency) may be helpful—but these are supportive, not essential.

The Long-Term Perspective

Think of your surgery as a reset of your facial structure. From this point forward:

- you will continue to age—but more gradually
- your results will remain impactful throughout your lifetime
- your daily skincare becomes the key to maintaining a youthful appearance

At some point in the future—often many years down the line—you may choose to revisit surgical options. In the meantime, your focus is simple: maintain your skin, and your results will follow.

A FINAL THOUGHT

You've already done the most important part.

Now, maintaining your results does not require complexity—only consistency.

Healthy skin, maintained over time, is what allows you to continue looking natural, refreshed, and truly yourself.

12 SECTION TWELVE

Common Questions.

Most patients feel comfortable being seen socially within 2–3 weeks, as the majority of visible swelling and bruising has resolved.

SECTION 12

Common Questions.



When will I look "normal" again?

Most patients feel comfortable being seen socially within 2–3 weeks, as the majority of visible swelling and bruising has resolved.

That said, subtle swelling—especially in the cheeks and neck—can persist and continues to improve gradually over time.

When will I see my final result?

You will see meaningful improvement within the first few weeks.

However, refinement continues over time:

- early results are visible at 3–4 weeks
- continued improvement occurs over 2–3 months
- final settling can take 6–12 months, especially in areas like the neck and incisions

Is the recovery painful?

Pain is typically minimal.

Most patients are comfortable using Tylenol alone, although prescription medication is available if needed.

You are more likely to feel:

- tightness
- swelling
- pressure rather than true pain.

Why do I look uneven or asymmetrical early on?

This is completely normal.

Swelling does not resolve evenly, and different areas of the face heal at different rates.

Temporary asymmetry is expected and improves as swelling subsides.

SECTION 12

Common Questions.



How long will my incisions take to heal?

Incisions go through predictable phases:

- 2–4 months: may appear pink or slightly firm
- up to 1 year or longer: continue to soften, fade, and mature

This is a gradual process, and patience is important.

Will people be able to tell I had surgery?

The goal of your procedure is not to make you look different—it is to restore your natural appearance.

As healing progresses, most patients hear:

- "You look refreshed"
- "You look well-rested"

—not that they had surgery.

How long will my results last?

The structural improvements from your procedure are long-lasting.

You will continue to age naturally, but from a more youthful starting point—and at a more gradual pace.

Your results will remain impactful throughout your lifetime.

Will I need fillers or additional procedures?

In most cases, no.

After restoring facial structure surgically:

- routine filler use is typically unnecessary
- over-treatment is avoided

Small, selective treatments—such as Botox or minor adjustments—may be used when appropriate, but they are not the foundation of your results.

SECTION 12

Common Questions.



What can I do to maintain my results?

The most important factor is skin care. Daily sun protection and consistent use of effective skincare—such as the KaramMD Trifecta—help maintain:

- skin quality
- tone and texture
- overall youthful appearance

When can I return to normal activities?

This varies slightly depending on your procedure, but in general:

- light activity: within the first week
- social activities: around 2–3 weeks
- full exercise: typically after 3–4 weeks, as directed

You will receive specific guidance based on your individual case.

When should I be concerned?

While most of the recovery process is straightforward, you should contact our office if you experience:

- sudden or rapidly increasing swelling
- significant pain not controlled with medication
- bleeding or expanding firmness in one area
- signs of infection (fever, spreading redness, unusual drainage)

If something does not feel right, we would always rather hear from you.

FINAL PERSPECTIVE

Most questions that come up during recovery are not signs of a problem—they are signs of normal healing.

Understanding what to expect allows you to move through the process with confidence.

And as always, our team is here to support you every step of the way.

13 SECTION THIRTEEN

Post-Operative Instructions.

*Your recovery will be smoothest when you
follow these guidelines carefully.*

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



Your recovery will be smoothest when you follow these guidelines carefully. Most instructions are straightforward—but consistency is essential.

THE FIRST 48 HOURS

This is the most important phase of early healing. Your focus should be simple: *rest, elevation, and minimizing strain.*

During this time:

- keep your head elevated at all times, including while sleeping
- limit movement and avoid bending, lifting, or straining
- stay well hydrated
- eat light, easy-to-digest meals

Swelling and tightness are expected and will increase over the first several days.

Cold vs. Heat

Cold compresses can be helpful in the first 48 hours to reduce swelling.

- apply gently
- avoid direct pressure on the surgical areas

After this early phase:

- heat should be avoided initially, as it can increase blood flow and potentially increase swelling or bleeding

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



Head Position

Proper positioning helps reduce swelling and protect your results.

- sleep on your back with your head elevated on 2–3 pillows or a wedge
- avoid lying flat
- avoid excessive turning of your head

Driving

Driving should be avoided in the early recovery period, particularly:

- while taking prescription pain medication
- or until you feel fully comfortable turning your head and reacting normally

Medications

Take all medications exactly as directed. Most patients are comfortable using:

- Tylenol

Prescription pain medication is available if needed. Avoid any medications or supplements that increase bleeding unless specifically cleared by our team.

Activity & Blood Pressure Control

One of the most important factors in recovery is maintaining stable blood pressure. Increases in blood pressure can raise the risk of bleeding, especially in the early days after surgery.

For the first few weeks, avoid:

- heavy lifting
- strenuous exercise
- bending over
- sudden or forceful movements
- situations that significantly elevate heart rate or stress

Light walking is encouraged early—but keep activity gentle.

Antibiotics

You will begin antibiotics the day before surgery and continue for several days after.

It is important to:

- take them exactly as prescribed
- complete the full course

This helps reduce the risk of infection during the early healing phase.

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



Nicotine & Alcohol

These are critical to avoid during recovery.

Nicotine (strictly avoid):

- smoking
- vaping
- patches or gum
- secondhand exposure

Nicotine impairs blood flow and can negatively affect healing.

Alcohol:

- avoid for at least 2 weeks after surgery
- alcohol can increase bleeding risk and affect blood pressure

Incision Care

Incisions require gentle, consistent care.

You will begin cleaning using:

- hydrogen peroxide
- cotton-tip applicators
- and an occlusive barrier such as Aquaphor or Dr. Karam's Enrich

Instructions:

- keep incision areas clean and as directed
- apply recommended ointments consistently
- do not pick, rub, or manipulate the area

It is normal for incisions to appear:

- pink
- slightly firm
- mildly raised

These changes improve gradually over time.

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



Sutures, Drains & Compression Sutures

If used:

- drains are typically removed within 3–5 days
- external compression sutures are removed within a similar timeframe
- all sutures are usually removed within the first week

Your exact timing will be guided at follow-up visits.

Important: Drains and compression sutures are helpful—they:

- reduce fluid buildup
- support healing
- and lower the risk of complications such as hematoma

Showering & Hygiene

Showering is typically allowed within a few days.

- avoid direct pressure on incision areas
- use gentle cleansing techniques

You will receive specific instructions based on your procedure.

Swelling & Bruising

Swelling follows a predictable pattern:

- peaks at days 2–6
- improves around days 6–7
- most visible swelling resolves within 2–4 weeks

Some residual swelling—especially in the cheeks and neck—can persist longer and gradually improve. Bruising typically resolves within the first 1–2 weeks.

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



WHAT TO AVOID

To protect your results and minimize complications:

- avoid nicotine (2 months before and after)
- avoid alcohol (minimum 2 weeks before and after)
- avoid medications/supplements that increase bleeding (2 weeks before and after)
- avoid strenuous activity or anything that raises blood pressure
- avoid excessive sun exposure

WHEN TO CONTACT US

Please contact our office if you experience:

- sudden or rapidly increasing swelling
- significant or worsening pain
- bleeding or expanding firmness in one area
- signs of infection (fever, spreading redness, unusual drainage)
- anything that feels concerning or unexpected

If something does not feel right, we would always rather hear from you.

SECTION 13

Post-Operative Instructions.



Final Guidance

Recovery is a controlled, step-by-step process. There is nothing complicated about it—but the details matter.

By protecting against:

- bleeding
- elevated blood pressure
- and impaired healing

you are giving yourself the best opportunity for a smooth recovery and an optimal result.

A CLOSING NOTE

And remember: you are not going through this alone—our team is here to guide you every step of the way.

14 SECTION FOURTEEN

Travel & Packing Checklist.

*Preparing the right items ahead of time will
make your recovery significantly more
comfortable and stress-free.*

SECTION 14

Travel & Packing Checklist.



Preparing the right items ahead of time will make your recovery significantly more comfortable and stress-free.

Most patients find that a simple, well-prepared setup allows them to focus entirely on healing.

What to Wear on the Day of Surgery

Comfort and ease are the priority.

- wear a loose, front-opening top (button-down or zip-up)
- choose clothing with a loose neckline to avoid contact with the surgical area
- wear comfortable pants or loungewear
- avoid anything that needs to be pulled over your head

In some cases, patients may choose to wear a camisole and underwear for added comfort.

Important Reminders

- do not bring jewelry or valuables
- remove eyelash extensions
- remove all gel, acrylic, or colored nail polish from your fingers

After surgery, you will not want to manipulate clothing or accessories—so keeping things simple is important.

What to Wear After Surgery

For the first 1–2 weeks, continue to prioritize comfort and simplicity:

- button-down or zip-up tops
- loose, soft fabrics
- comfortable loungewear or pajamas
- easy slip-on shoes

Avoid tight clothing, especially around the neck and face.

Setting Up Your Recovery Space

Before surgery, prepare a space where you can rest comfortably with minimal effort.

This should include:

- 2–3 pillows or a wedge pillow (to keep your head elevated)
- a neck pillow (optional, but helpful)
- cold compresses or ice packs
- gauze and any recommended supplies
- a small table or tray within reach
- a water bottle for hydration

The goal is to keep everything easily accessible so you do not need to move unnecessarily.

SECTION 14

Travel & Packing Checklist.



Personal Care Items

Have these ready and within reach:

- gentle cleanser
- moisturizer
- lip balm (especially helpful in early recovery)
- hair ties or clips

Medications & Supplies

Prepare all medications ahead of time so there is nothing to manage after surgery:

- all prescribed medications
- Tylenol
- blood pressure monitor (if available)
- post-operative ointments or products provided

Having everything ready ahead of time makes recovery significantly easier.

SECTION 14

Travel & Packing Checklist.



Food & Hydration

Plan for simple, easy-to-manage meals:

- soft, light foods
- soups, smoothies, or prepared meals
- snacks that require minimal effort

Hydration is important—always keep water readily available.

For Traveling Patients

If you are staying in a hotel or recovery retreat:

- bring everything you need so you don't have to go out
- ensure your environment is quiet, comfortable, and supportive
- arrange transportation and assistance in advance

Your goal after surgery is to rest—not manage logistics.

A NOTE ABOUT PETS

During early recovery, it is best to avoid close contact with pets.

This helps reduce the risk of:

- infection
- accidental contact with surgical areas

A SIMPLE PERSPECTIVE

Preparation removes stress.

When everything is set up ahead of time, your only job after surgery becomes:

rest, recover, and trust the process.

15 SECTION FIFTEEN

Companion / Caregiver Guide.

If you are helping care for a patient after surgery, your role is simple—but important.

SECTION 15

Companion / Caregiver Guide.



If you are helping care for a patient after surgery, your role is simple—but important.

Your presence provides:

- support
- reassurance
- and helps ensure a smooth recovery during the early phase

THE FIRST 24 - 72 HOURS

This is when your support matters most. During this time, the patient will:

- feel tired and need rest
- experience swelling and tightness
- benefit from a calm, low-stress environment

Your role is to help them stay comfortable and follow instructions.

What You Should Do

- stay with the patient for at least the first 24–72 hours
- help organize and administer medications as directed
- encourage hydration and light meals
- ensure the head remains elevated
- help limit unnecessary movement or activity

Most importantly:

create a calm, steady, and reassuring environment.

SECTION 15

Companion / Caregiver Guide.



Ongoing Support

While the first few days are the most intensive, it is often helpful for patients to have support for up to one week.

Recovery can feel isolating, and having:

- a trusted friend
- family member
- or professional caregiver can make a meaningful difference in the overall experience.

What Is Normal

You may notice:

- swelling (especially days 2–6)
- mild bruising
- temporary asymmetry
- low energy or fatigue

These are expected parts of the healing process. Understanding this ahead of time helps prevent unnecessary concern.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

While most recovery is straightforward, please contact our office if you notice:

- sudden or rapidly increasing swelling
- significant or worsening pain
- bleeding or expanding firmness
- fever or signs of infection
- anything that feels unusual or concerning

If you are unsure, it is always appropriate to reach out.

SECTION 15

Companion / Caregiver Guide.



Helping the Patient Emotionally

It is very common for patients to feel uncertain in the early days—especially around days 3 to 5, when swelling is at its peak.

You can help by reminding them:

- this phase is temporary
- what they are seeing is normal
- improvement typically begins around days 6–7

One of the most helpful things you can reinforce is:

they are in the process of healing—not evaluating the result.

Keep Things Simple

The goal during this phase is not to do more—it's to do less.

- keep the environment quiet
- avoid unnecessary activity
- focus on rest and consistency

A FINAL THOUGHT

Your role is not to manage every detail—but to provide steady, calm support during the early stages of recovery.

When things feel uncertain, the most helpful reminder is:

trust the process—healing happens in stages.

16 SECTION SIXTEEN

Contact & Support Information.

Your recovery is a guided process, and our team is here to support you every step of the way.

Contact & Support Information.



Your recovery is a guided process, and our team is here to support you every step of the way. If you have questions or concerns at any point, please do not hesitate to reach out.

OFFICE CONTACT

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HOURS Monday – Friday · 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
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AFTER-HOURS SUPPORT

If you need assistance outside of regular office hours

AFTER-HOURS PHONE (858) 210-7370

DR. KARAM'S DIRECT LINE (858) 353-9885

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

If you believe you are experiencing a medical emergency: Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room immediately.

WHEN TO CONTACT US

Please contact our office if you experience:

- sudden or rapidly increasing swelling
- significant or worsening pain
- bleeding or expanding firmness
- fever or signs of infection
- anything that feels concerning or unexpected

If you are unsure whether something is normal, it is always appropriate to reach out.

A FINAL NOTE

Most of the recovery process follows a predictable and normal course. When questions arise, they are usually part of the healing process—but we are always here to guide you.

You are not navigating this alone.

Medication *tracker.*



Track your medications during the first two weeks of recovery. Tick each dose as you take it.

MEDICATION & DOSE	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D13	D14

Daily log — sleep & pain (0-10)

DAY	HOURS OF SLEEP	PAIN LEVEL	NOTES
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

Appointment reminders

DATE	TIME	VISIT

K

*Look as young as
you feel — while
always looking
like yourself.*

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