



## Facial Fat Grafting

Facial Fat Grafting improves visible signs of aging and redefines the contours of the face to provide results that last for decades. The secret behind this innovative technique is the placement of discreet incisions, removal of excess lower body fat, and meticulous transfer of harvested fat to deficient regions of the face to allow for restoration of a natural, refreshed appearance. These sequential steps are the key to reestablishing facial volume and youthfulness.

The following information will answer the most commonly asked questions regarding what to expect after surgery. It is highly advised that you and your caretaker read this packet **SEVERAL** times **BEFORE** surgery to adequately prepare for the recovery process. Those who follow these instructions faithfully generally have the smoothest post-operative course and proper healing.

**Recommended Items to Purchase:** Cotton Swabs/Q-tips, Hydrogen Peroxide, Bacitracin Ointment, Gauze—for non-taped incisions only

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## After Surgery Patient Care & Cleaning Instructions

1. Leave all tape over incision lines in place until your next post-operative visit. If the tape comes off prior to this appointment or there was no tape placed, clean incisions with hydrogen peroxide on a cotton swab. Then, apply a layer of Bacitracin ointment to the same sutures lines with a new cotton swab. This routine will need to be repeated **4 times** per day for one week. It is NOT necessary to perform these cleanings throughout the night. New cleaning and care instructions will be provided at the one week post-operative visit.
2. Daily showering is recommended with gentle hair washing starting 24-hours after surgery. The abdominal binder should stay in place and worn continuously for 48-hours after surgery unless showering.
3. Swelling and bruising increase for 2-3 days following surgery. Asymmetric or uneven swelling and bruising (ie, swelling and bruising that is more pronounced on one complete side or specific area of the face and lower body) is both common and temporary. Use of cool compresses and head elevation is strongly recommended to help keep swelling to a minimum.
4. Monitor for significant swelling of the face that feels firm or fluid-filled. If there is concern for a seroma or hematoma (ie, fluid or blood-filled collection under the skin), please contact the office immediately at (737) 787 - 8200 to determine whether or not an in-office visit and possible fluid drainage is necessary.



## The 30-Day Recovery Guide: What to Expect from Day 0 to Day 30+

Dr. Givens strongly believes that patient education is key to a successful surgical recovery. Below is an easy to follow **30-day Facial Fat Grafting Recovery Guide** so that you will know what to expect during the healing period. It is important to understand that the provided timeline represents a general recovery time frame and cannot be guaranteed.

### **Facial Fat Grafting Recovery: Week 1**

**Day 0 (Surgery Day).** Once surgery is complete, you will be taken to the recovery room where a specialized nursing team will monitor and care for you prior to your departure from the operative facility. You will need a friend or family member (no ride-hailing services or self-driving) to drive you to a home or hotel of your choice that is located within 30-minutes of the operative facility for the first night. You will need a caretaker to be available to you for at least the first 3 days after surgery. It is important to keep your surgical dressing in place, rest on your back in a recliner or in bed with your head elevated, and monitor for pain and nausea overnight. For those who have either elected or been required to remain in the post-surgery facility overnight, the nursing staff will be your assumed caretaker during your stay. Of note, observation in the overnight facility is determined PRIOR to scheduling surgery.

**Day 1.** You will come to the office the morning after surgery for a general cleaning and surgical check. Your caretaker must come with you to this appointment to both aid you physically and help you remember what is discussed during the visit. Your abdominal dressing will be removed, your suture lines will be checked, and a thorough review of your at home cleaning routine will be provided. Your abdominal binder will be reapplied and must stay in place for 48-hours. In the unlikely event that a fluid collection is observed during this visit, you will need to remain at a residence located within 30-minutes of the office/surgical facility until stated otherwise by Dr. Givens to allow for expedient care and monitoring.

**Days 2-4.** The abdominal binder should be removed at home in the morning prior to bathing. Daily showering is recommended with gentle hair washing. The abdominal binder should be replaced after showering and worn continuously for 48-hours after surgery. Swelling and bruising will increase on days 2-3, but will usually peak around day 4 before gradually resolving. Most patients describe moderate discomfort, aching, and tightness/stiffness of the face and abdomen rather than sharp pain. Swelling and bruising also cause temporary numbness and tingling. Your pain medication should be used sparingly and as prescribed by Dr. Givens. In addition, the use of cool compresses, head elevation, and Extra Strength Tylenol relieves this discomfort and tightness best.



**Days 5-6.** Most patients “turn the corner” between days 5 and 6. By this time, the majority of patients no longer need prescription pain medication. You should start to see swelling of the face and neck go down. You should also start feeling more comfortable moving about.

**Day 7.** You will come to the office for your one week post-operative visit for suture removal, which is quick and uncomplicated because it is done with small delicate instruments to minimize discomfort. While you will feel much better after this visit, you must understand that this is NOT going to be your final result. Pause and read that again. At this point, a large amount of the post-operative swelling, bruising, and tightness will have subsided. Temporary numbness, tingling, stiffness, and discomfort may persist but to a lesser degree. This is NORMAL. You will see a significant improvement in the shape of your face over the next few weeks to months.

### **Facial Fat Grafting Recovery: Week 2**

**Days 8-14.** You will still have some swelling and bruising around the affected areas and may experience residual but temporary numbness, tingling, and tightness. This is normal after facial fat grafting and should not cause concern. At the end of the second week post-surgery, many patients feel “like themselves” again and are ready to return to work, school, or other obligations with a lifting restriction of no more than 15-lbs. Leisurely walking is encouraged. Do NOT perform household cleaning or any other activity that elevates your heart rate.

### **Facial Fat Grafting Recovery: Weeks 3 & 4**

**Days 15-30.** You will begin to see real improvements in your facial contour. However, it will take a MINIMUM of 6-8 weeks for ALL swelling and bruising to resolve and a FULL year for the face to reach its final contour. During your one month office visit, a small steroid injection into thickened regions of the face may be performed at the discretion of Dr. Givens. The steroid injection helps to soften healing tissues. You can now return to all regular activities and exercise without people noticing outward signs of your procedure. Incision sites will have a pinkish-red hue, but this should fade with time.

### **Facial Fat Grafting Recovery: Day 30 & Beyond**

**Day 30+.** After the one month post-operative visit, you should be back to doing ALL normal activities and enjoying life with your new look. While it can take up to a year for very minor swelling, bruising, tightness, and numbness to resolve, this is typically only noticeable to you. Remaining follow-up visits with Dr. Givens (ie, 3-month, 6-month, 1-year) are to assess your progress. Photographic documentation will be performed at each visit as well. You will see great changes as the swelling continues to go down.



## **Return to Normal Activity FAQs: Bathing, Beauty Care, Exercise, Work, & Things to Avoid**

### **Bathing**

- You may take a shower and wash your hair starting 24-hours after surgery (ie, Day 1 after surgery).
- Daily showering is recommended with gentle hair washing.
- Wetting of your suture lines will occur, but do NOT submerge your healing incision sites.
- Remember to replace your abdominal binder after each shower session and wear it continuously for 48-hours after surgery.
- You may cleanse your face gently with a mild soap after 1 week.

### **Makeup, Hair Care, & Salon Maintenance**

- Makeup may be applied starting 2 weeks after surgery.
- Most hair salon maintenance may be performed starting 2 weeks after surgery, but you must have your stylist avoid disturbing the treated regions of your face.
- Facial waxing, sugaring, and threading may be performed starting 6 weeks after surgery. Similar lower body treatments may be performed starting 3 weeks after surgery.
- Microblading and facial tattooing may be performed starting 6 months after surgery.

### **Clothing Choices, Glasses, & Contacts**

- Wear clothing that fastens in the front rather than clothes that pull over your head and loose fitting pants/shorts to avoid pulling on suture lines for 2 weeks after surgery.
- You may wear glasses and contacts. If your eyelids are swollen after surgery, do NOT wear contacts until the swelling has resolved.

### **Exercise & Other Extracurricular Activities**

- During the first week after surgery, you are encouraged to leisurely walk. Do NOT perform strenuous activities such as cardio/aerobics, jogging, swimming, tennis, golf, Pilates, yoga, barre, spin, high intensity interval training, and weight-lifting for 3 FULL weeks.
- You should avoid any activity that increases your heart rate, even bedroom activities (ie, sexual activity of any type) for 3 FULL weeks.
- You may be “up and around the house” but do NOT perform house cleaning, bending, or lifting more than 15-lbs for 3 weeks.



### **Return to Work**

- Most patients take about 1-2 weeks off from work, school, or other obligations. Depending on your individual recovery process and job requirements, you may be able to return sooner or need to wait a bit longer.
- If your job involves heavy lifting (ie, more than 15-lbs) or a significant amount of public contact, you will need to plan on taking a full 3 weeks off.

### **Things to Avoid**

- Avoid excessive facial expressions, emotional states (ie, crying, laughing, yawning, talking), straining, bending, and turning of the head/neck and torso for 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you must cough, place and hold a pillow firmly against your abdomen to alleviate excess pressure.
- Avoid direct application of ice to the face or abdomen as extremes of temperature can damage the healing tissues and result in an unsatisfactory outcome. Do NOT sleep with any cool compresses on your face or abdomen.
- Avoid use of hot tubs or extremes of heat for 3 weeks after surgery as this can dilate your blood vessels and cause hematoma formation.
- Avoid using any and all medications listed on the “Medications to AVOID Before Surgery” page of the website, which can be found under the Patient Resources tab of the toolbar then the Surgery & Post-Treatment Care drop-down menu.
- Avoid quickly rising from a sitting position. Instead, slowly stand and give yourself a few seconds before walking forward to ensure you do not become light-headed, dizzy, or unexpectedly syncopal.
- Avoid caffeine, tea, and other dehydrating substances. Drink plenty of fluids and electrolytes to stay hydrated.
- Avoid direct sun exposure to any surgical sites for 9 months after surgery. Use sun protection including sun block, wide brimmed hats, sunglasses, and UV protective clothing.
- Avoid driving or operating heavy machinery while taking narcotic pain medication.
- Do NOT smoke, vape, or use any nicotine-related products (ie, nicotine patches, nicotine gum, chew/dip) as these substances cause significant and detrimental blood vessel constriction. Vessel constriction decreases required blood flow to the healing tissues of the face/neck and may ultimately result in delayed wound healing, unsatisfactory cosmetic outcome, and even skin necrosis.



## What to Expect & Consider During Your Recovery

As with any major surgery, a facial fat grafting procedure carries the risk of bleeding, infection, pain, skin changes or loss, fluid collection (ie, hematoma/seroma), temporary or permanent facial nerve injury, asymmetry of the face and abdomen, abdominal wall perforation, paresthesia (ie, numbness), hair thinning or loss, blood clot formation, corneal abrasion, cosmetic abnormality, unsatisfactory scarring, and/or the need for additional surgery. The following information outlines what to expect and be aware of during the recovery process after facial fat grafting.

### **Bruising & Swelling**

Your face, neck, and abdomen may appear swollen and lumpy with variable amounts of bruising or discoloration. Bruising and swelling increase for 2-3 days following surgery and are often asymmetric/uneven (ie, swelling and bruising that is more pronounced on one complete side or specific area of the face). Use of cool compresses, head elevation, leisurely walking, *Arnica montana*, and avoidance of any and all medications listed on the “Medications to AVOID Before Surgery” page of the website will help to decrease bruising, swelling, and inflammation. While the majority subsides within 2 weeks, it will take a MINIMUM of 6-8 weeks for ALL swelling and bruising to resolve and a FULL year for the face to reach its final contour.

- **Cool Compresses**: Wash cloths dipped in ice water or cool gel packs can be applied to the face and abdomen for 15-minutes a few times daily during the first week after surgery to help reduce swelling and discoloration. Do NOT apply direct ice as extremes of temperature can damage the healing tissues and result in an unsatisfactory outcome. Do NOT sleep with cool compresses on your face and abdomen.
- **Head Elevation**: Rest on your back with your head elevated above the level of your heart/chest by sleeping in a recliner or on 2-3 pillows in bed. You will notice that you tend to be more swollen upon waking in the morning and less by the evening. Do NOT sleep on your side or stomach for 3 weeks after surgery.
- **Arnica montana**: This over-the-counter sublingual homeopathic preparation when taken in frequent doses, for a few days before and continuing for a week after surgery, seems to have the ability to diminish post-operative bruising.

### **Pain & Discomfort**

Moderate discomfort/aching, tightness, and stiffness are expected, temporary, and very normal experiences during the healing and recovery process after facial fat grafting. While it may take 2-3 weeks for resolution, significant improvement is noticed after 1 week. In addition, swelling and tightness of the face may temporarily interfere with the symmetry of your lips and your ability to smile. This will also resolve



within a few weeks allowing for return of your normal smile. Prior to surgery you will be provided with a series of prescribed medications that are important to take as instructed as each one serves a specific purpose in the recovery process.

- **Pain Medication:** There is usually only minimal-moderate actual pain following facial liposuction, which resolves within the first couple of days after surgery. However, you may experience the above described and expected discomfort and tightness, which can take longer to completely resolve. These sensations will often seem worse at night, especially when one becomes quite anxious. Excessive intake of pain medication, particularly in the immediate post-operative period, often results in light-headedness, nausea, and constipation—making recovery more tedious. Thus, a regimen of cool compresses and Tylenol Extra Strength is often more effective. However, if the pain is severe, you may use your provided narcotic pain medication as prescribed by Dr. Givens. Remember to take pain medication after eating to avoid nausea. Do NOT take narcotic medication at the same time as Tylenol ingestion. If you develop narcotic-induced constipation, you may take an over-the-counter laxative or stool softener from your local pharmacy. Do NOT drive while taking prescription pain medication. Do NOT take aspirin or ibuprofen.
- **Anti-Depressant Medication:** It is not unusual for patients to go through a period of mild depression after cosmetic surgery no matter how much they wanted the operation and were educated on what to expect post-operatively. Remember, same day surgery does not mean same day results. If you are able to realize that this is a very temporary phase, the emotional aspect will resolve. If you take anti-depressant medications, please continue per your normal pre-surgical routine unless specifically instructed otherwise. If you experience any suicidal or homicidal ideations, please contact both your psychiatrist and Dr. Givens. While Dr. Givens does NOT prescribe anti-depressant medications, she would like to ensure that you have all of the care and treatment that you need after surgery.

### **Numbness & Hair Thinning**

Parts of the face and abdomen will be numb after surgery. This is both a normal and expected part of the recovery process after facial fat grafting. As sensation returns over the next few months, you may experience itching, tingling, stinging, or intermittent sharp pain. There may be transient thinning of the hair diffusely on the scalp. This is known as “hair shock”, in which a stressor (ie, surgery) triggers hair loss temporarily. Unfortunately, it is completely unpredictable which patients will incur hair loss. Although the new hair shaft can take 3-6 months to visibly regenerate, rest assured your hair will return.

### **Infection**

Prior to surgery you will be provided with a prescription for an antibiotic medication. It is important to fill this prescription BEFORE your surgery, take as instructed, and make sure to finish the entire course as this medication serves a specific purpose in the recovery process. The first dose is to be administered the day BEFORE your surgery. If you develop an allergic reaction or signs/symptoms of an infection including persistent redness and/or drainage from incision sites, call the office immediately as a new/different medication or treatment may be required.



### **Fluid Collection & Hematoma**

If you develop a pronounced collection of fluid of the face or abdomen, you should call the office immediately. You will likely be instructed to come to the office for evaluation and possible aspiration of the fluid (ie, sticking a needle into the area of fluid accumulation to suck out the fluid) followed by pressure dressing application. You will be instructed to keep the pressure dressing on and in place until you are re-evaluated in the office the following day. If more fluid has accumulated, re-aspiration of fluid with new pressure dressing application will be performed on a daily basis until all fluid has resolved. In the event a rapidly expanding fluid collection (ie, hematoma) develops, you may be required to go back to the operating room for drainage, cauterization (ie, heated ligation of a blood vessel causing the bleeding), and possible drain placement. The formation of a rapidly expanding hematoma, while rare, is taken very seriously and must be treated emergently to prevent skin necrosis.

### **Scars & Revision Surgery**

Any time a cut is made on the body there will be a scar. However, scar visibility depends on several factors. Facial fat grafting requires deliberate placement incisions of the face and lower body to minimize scar visibility. Healing incision lines will have a deep pink hue with variable amounts of swelling and thickening initially. Post-surgical scars will continue to soften and fade for up to a year. Most of the time, an experienced surgeon can produce long-lasting results that both of you are pleased with—often for *several* decades. However, you must remember that even in the most experienced hands, there are no guarantees in surgery. Further surgical intervention is NOT scheduled prior to the 6-month post-operative mark and more likely closer to a year unless absolutely necessary. It is imperative to allow for most if not all of the post-operative swelling and inflammation to resolve prior to further operation. Finally, you must understand that while surgery can improve the youthful appearance, it cannot stop the aging process of the body over time.

- **Steroid Injection:** A low-dose steroid may be injected into uneven or thickened areas of scarring of the face. It is common to require at least a single injection at the one month post-operative office visit. Timing of the injection, amount injected, and need for continued injections will be determined by Dr. Givens. The steroid is not systemic; rather, it is localized only to the part of the face and/or neck it is injected into.
- **Massage:** Regular massage of uneven or thickened areas of the face is encouraged starting at 3 weeks, but not before this time period unless stated otherwise by Dr. Givens. Massage can be performed 3-4 times per day for 1-3 minutes each time.



## **Conclusion: Summary on the Facial Fat Grafting After Surgery Experience**

1. Your face, neck, and abdomen may appear swollen and lumpy with variable amounts of bruising or discoloration. Bruising and swelling increase for 2-3 days following surgery and are often asymmetric/uneven. Remember, this is temporary and will subside to a large extent within 2 weeks. However, it will take a MINIMUM of 6-8 weeks for ALL swelling and bruising to resolve and a FULL year for the face to reach its final contour.
2. Call the office if you experience a persistent temperature of 101°F or higher, sudden significant swelling or discoloration, unusual bleeding, persistent or worsening redness, discharge from the wound or other evidence of infection, or development of any drug reaction. There is a 24-hour answering service available during non-office hours for urgent post-operative concerns.
3. Each patient will have a unique experience, and you should always follow the directions provided by Dr. Givens. Those who educate themselves before surgery and follow Dr. Givens' post-operative care instructions usually have the easiest recoveries and the best outcomes.
4. Most of all—BE PATIENT during the healing process. Remember, same day surgery does NOT mean same day recovery. Healing is a gradual process. It is normal to be impatient and feel discouraged while waiting for swelling, bruising, and discomfort to diminish. Allow yourself extra rest, a nutritious diet to promote healing, and avoid stress during your recovery.