

# LOOKING GOOD, AT ANY AGE

**CONVENTIONAL FACELIFTS ARE** established surgical procedures that have been around for a long time, since the 1900s. These procedures are used to rejuvenate patients who showed signs of aging.

In particular, the area around the forehead - the brow, cheek and jaw, and neck are areas where as one gets older, the skin becomes saggy, causes a lot of infolds and wrinkles. The aging process also contributes to a change in the facial shape. When one is young, usually the face is more oval or triangular shape, as one becomes older, it may adopt a more squarish or rectangular shape. With more folds and wrinkles, the person not only looks older, but also appears more tired looking.

The principle of rejuvenation surgery is to reverse the effect of what has happened in the aging process. So the procedure helps to tighten the skin, to lift up the tissues, and put them back into original position. There are therefore many types of facelifts, depending on which areas have been affected and need to be treated.

In general, the face can be divided into three zones – forehead, face and neck. For each of these zones, there are specific treatment options.

No matter what is available in the market today, surgery is still the gold standard for facial rejuvenation. A good facelift procedure can last anything between five to 10 years. There are many different types of facelifts, neck lifts and forehead lifts: some involve superficial or subcutaneous plane; others involve what we call deep plane face lifting while yet others provide a combination of the two.

Different layers of the skin have different problems that have to be treated and the fact that there are so many different techniques show there is no single technique that is superior to another.

Before patients decide on which procedure to opt for, they need to have a lengthy discussion with their doctor on what they prefer as well as what is right for them. What they prefer may not be necessarily be what is right for them.

Many times, I find that while patients realise they have a problem, a lot of them don't really know what are the best options for them and they need to get advice from their plastic surgeons.

Techniques are always evolving, as refinements of whatever techniques that have gone on before. Sometimes the emphasis may be on shorter scar techniques, limited dissections, special

internal stitches to lift up and tighten - all are variations and modifications and improvements of existing techniques.

Its important to understand that the procedure selected varies from individual to individual, depending on age or other conditions. Those in the older age group or with very severe laxity, or significant aging, may require more radical surgery. There is not just one treatment to solve every problem; we have to modify, adjust and customize our treatment plan to each individual.

But in general, there has been a swing in interest to less invasive type of facelift procedures.

Such minimally invasive procedures may not suitable be for everybody but are recommended for younger patients, usually in their 40s to 50s, with less severe face aging. One such procedure is thread lift - a type of facelift that uses specially designed surgical threads placed under the skin in different positions and pulled in different directions to lift the tissue under the skin. And when you lift the tissue, you also lift the skin. There are many types of threads in the market, which may be confusing and hard for a lay person to understand and differentiate. For example, gold threads are actually not facelifting threads; they have no significant lifting effect although they are believed to have a rejuvenating effect.

Thread lifts are very effective, when used in the right situations with the right kind of patients. The disadvantage, though, is it is not as long lasting as a conventional facelift – about half as long; but, the advantage is, it can be repeated – the doctor can redo, add or tighten the pre-existing threads when the skin starts to sag again.

There is also the non-invasive or non-surgical facelift for collagen tightening; it may not the best in terms of outcome, but the advantage is: there is no downtime. This uses ultrasound technology: a machine called Ulthera delivers heat energy through ultra sound waves under the skin to where the collagen tissues are. This heat energy stimulates the underlying collagen to grow and as a result, the skin becomes tighter. This helps to reverse the effects of aging and can last for 18 to 24 months. The process can be repeated regularly and so it is fast gaining popularity among patients who do not want to have any downtime at all. ■



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