



face

FACING UP TO FACELIFT SURGERY

MODERN TECHNIQUES MEAN THE DAYS OF LOOKING OVERDONE AFTER A FACELIFT ARE LONG GONE SAYS SYDNEY PLASTIC SURGEON **DR WARWICK NETTLE**. JENNI GILBERT REPORTS.



According to Sydney plastic surgeon Dr Warwick Nettle, the term 'facelift' has, over time, acquired a number of misleading connotations that, he believes, have deterred some people from discovering the beautiful, natural-looking results facial rejuvenation surgery can achieve.

Since the first facelifts were performed more than a century ago, medical advances mean the tools and techniques used in facelift surgery today are very different to those used even just ten years ago. Today, surgeons have a wealth of experience and resources that, when combined, mean the 'pulled', 'overdone' facelifts of the past are well and truly behind us. Still, Dr Nettle believes many people fear the term 'facelift'.

'I have had patients articulate in great detail what they would like to improve about their appearance,' he says. 'They will tell me they want to lift their mid-face, firm their jawline and neck and then in the next breath they will add, "But I don't want a facelift!"'

However, according to Dr Nettle, without facelift – and often neck lift – surgery, a significant improvement in these areas cannot be achieved. He believes the media attention given to poor celebrity facial rejuvenation results has created a misconception that facelifts inevitably lead to what he refers to as the taut, 'wind tunnel' effect.

He also believes it's important to distinguish between facelift surgery and other, often non-surgical rejuvenation procedures. 'Over recent years, the word "facelift" has been used in relation to everything from skincare to dermal fillers, anti-wrinkle injections and non-surgical energy devices, so

that the true meaning has been diluted and consumers are confused about their options,' he explains.

'There are very effective non-surgical energy devices which can certainly tighten skin and subtly lift the features, but they cannot provide the same results as facelift surgery when sagging of the facial features and skin has reached a certain point,' Dr Nettle adds.

In the hands of a qualified, experienced surgeon with an artistic eye, there is nothing to fear from a facelift, he says.

'Knowing what causes people to look "overdone" after surgery is one of the first steps in ensuring natural-looking results,' says Dr Nettle, who believes there are two main causes of unnatural-looking facelifts.

'The first is when the face has just been tightened, without replacing any of the volume that has been lost as a result of ageing,' he explains. 'The second is a result of disharmony, caused when the jaw and neck is tightened but the mid-face is left to sag.'

Dr Nettle combines this understanding and his knowledge of how the face ages with an aesthetic flair and a tailored approach to each patient to achieve optimal, natural-looking results.

'As we age, certain features of the face become more prominent because fat is lost. The skin and muscles then start to droop. This can lead to jowling, saggy necks and deep nasolabial (nose to mouth) and labial mandibular (mouth to chin) folds,' says Dr Nettle. 'I like to think of it as like a sail on a boat with the wind behind it,' he adds. 'When we age, it's as if the wind comes out of the sail.'

Dr Nettle performs both facelift and mini-lift procedures to address these ageing characteristics. 'A facelift addresses muscle and skin laxity from the eyes downward and includes the neck. This is also known as a lower facelift,' he explains. 'A mini-lift addresses the face with or without minor neck tightening.'

Many people believe that a full facelift necessarily needs to include lifts to the brow and eye areas, says Dr Nettle, who will only rejuvenate these areas should they need it. 'If someone has a drooping brow and baggy eyelids, for example, it would be detrimental to the overall result of the facelift if these were not addressed too.'

During facelift procedures Dr Nettle says it's important to only slightly tighten the skin. He believes that this is the best way to achieve the most natural-looking results. He can then correct facial sagging by lifting the underlying muscles in the face.

'The superficial musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS) is the layer of membrane deep in the skin that is attached to the muscle,' says Dr Nettle. 'During a SMAS lift, an incision is made in or behind the hairline and just in front of the ear. The skin is carefully separated from the muscle and fat layers beneath, and the muscles and deeper tissues are

then tightened using sutures.' The facial skin is then pulled backwards and excess skin removed.

Dr Nettle believes that the SMAS lift helps achieve longer-lasting results without having to over-tighten the skin. This is because while skin will stretch, the SMAS won't.

Sometimes, other procedures are needed to achieve a complete rejuvenation of the face. Depending on the circumstances of each patient, Dr Nettle may perform adjunct procedures such as prosthetic implants, fat transfer, or augmentation of the bone structure. These can help balance the effects of a facelift and restore more youthful facial contours.

By combining facelift surgery with volume replacement techniques, the whole face can be rejuvenated, and patients can look forward to natural-looking results.

The upsurge in non-surgical facial rejuvenation has meant many women and men are waiting longer before seeking facelift surgery. However, there comes a time when non-surgical intervention is no longer sufficient to achieve the desired outcome.

'In my experience, with facelift surgery, up to 10 or more years can be wiped from a person's appearance,' Dr Nettle concludes. **csbm**

