

Procedures

Brow Lift

What are the issues?

As early as our forties, our eyebrows begin to drop with gravity. This 'ptosis' contributes to sagging of the upper eyelid and results in an aged, sad, stern or serious facial expression that contradicts the way we feel. While making the face appear older, this may also affect the perception others have of us. In some cases, a low brow position runs in the family. People with brow asymmetry may also seek corrective surgery.

Brow ptosis causes compensatory over contraction of the forehead muscles which elevate the brow. This in turn contributes to the long horizontal creases and wrinkles on the forehead. A brow lift elevates the brow into a more youthful and pleasing position. It will also reduce, but not eliminate, some of the transverse forehead creases and wrinkles.

What can the procedure achieve?

A brow lift is effective at correcting sagging eyebrows. It can also successfully reduce the horizontal lines across the forehead and the vertical 'frown lines' at the inner ends of the eyebrows. Occasionally, brow ptosis contributes to sagging of the upper eyelid which may encroach into the visual field. This may be addressed with a brow lift with or without upper eyelid surgery.

Some people experience headaches and tiredness due to overworking of the forehead muscles trying to lift the brow. Brow lift surgery may help to alleviate these.

What does the procedure involve?

The brow lift operation is performed under general anaesthetic and usually takes between one to two hours. We can use various techniques to elevate the brow. Traditional methods require an incision across the whole width of the forehead, either at the hairline or behind it, within the hair-bearing scalp. Occasionally, the incision may be best hidden in one of the creases of the forehead itself. In the traditional or 'open' brow lift, the elevated forehead is advanced upwards to achieve the desired elevation. We then remove the excess skin before closing the incision with stitches.

We can also achieve brow lifting by directly excising the skin above the brow. This leaves a scar adjacent to the brow which is normally well hidden. However this direct approach is perhaps better suited to men with male pattern baldness who wish to avoid conspicuous scars on their forehead and scalp. In this case, the operation may be performed under local anaesthetic.

In more recent years, the procedure can be performed 'endoscopically' through minimal access incisions in the scalp. We make three to five small incisions behind the forehead, which we then undermine and lift using specialised instruments. We may remove some areas of muscle between the eyebrows to reduce the downward pull on the brow and reduce midline wrinkles. Next, we secure the elevated forehead to the skull bone using stitches, a temporary screw or a specially designed dissolving bone anchor known as 'endotine'.

The forehead soon re-attaches to the bone in its elevated position, giving a more youthful appearance.

The desirable position of the brow in men and women and between the different races is different and this must be taken into consideration.

What is right for me?

People are often less aware of drooping eyebrows than their other facial features. Yet rejuvenating the brow is often the feature patients appreciate most post-operatively. Have a look at your own brow,

think carefully about its contribution to your facial appearance, and decide if you think a brow lift would be beneficial. Your surgeon will be happy to discuss the likely outcome and limitations in your case.

What are the limitations?

A brow lift will only address the forehead area. You may benefit from other surgical and non-surgical procedures to achieve a more harmonious facial appearance.

You should think carefully about what you are hoping to achieve and discuss this in detail with your surgeon, who will then be better able to inform you of the most appropriate procedure, the expected outcome and limitations.

What are the risks?

Like all surgical procedures, brow lifts have an element of risk. If you require a general anaesthetic, there is a small risk of chest infection and thrombosis (blood clots) in the legs or lungs, especially among smokers. We may give you treatment to minimise the risk of thrombosis, but you can help yourself by stopping smoking and coming off the contraceptive pill.

Bleeding

Although we try our best to minimise all complications, bruising and swelling are to be expected after a brow lift. This may take a few days to resolve. Occasionally, the bruising will descend with gravity into the area around the eyes. Rarely, blood will collect beneath the elevated forehead (haematoma). This may require a return to the operating theatre to drain the blood and seal the bleeding vessel.

Infection

As with all operations, there is a risk of infection. You may be given antibiotics to prevent or treat this if required.

Numbness

In up to 40% of cases, brow lifts can result in some numbness of the forehead and scalp behind the incisions or weakness in the muscles of the forehead through nerve damage. This is often temporary but may be permanent.

Scarring

Your surgeon will do their best to minimise and hide any scars resulting from the operation. Scars on the face normally heal extremely well and those in the hair-bearing scalp will be naturally hidden. With a receded or receding hairline, scars may be, or become, more obvious. You may lose some hair adjacent to the scar within the hair-bearing scalp, however this is usually temporary.

What can I expect afterwards?

After a brow lift procedure, you should expect some pain and swelling. We will prescribe suitable painkillers as needed. The endoscopic brow lift techniques have greatly reduced the amount of scarring and swelling that occurs post-operatively.

You can expect to stay in hospital for one night following your surgery, but this will depend on your circumstances. You should expect to take at least a week off work to recover from a brow lift. However, you may need longer, particularly if bruising or swelling persists.

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Contact Us

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