



When is the Right Time FOR A FACELIFT?

By Evan R. Ransom, MD

It's always the same gesture: two fingers, placed at the angle of the jaw and in front of the ear on each side, and then pushed upward and backward. "Doctor, can you just do this?," the patient asks. "Yes," I reply. "I can. That is called a facelift." This response generates a couple different reactions. Some prospective patients are surprised that what they have just pantomimed requires an actual surgical procedure; others grin sheepishly, as if they have artfully tricked me into suggesting to them what they actually wanted, but dared not ask for.

As a facial plastic surgeon, I love this conversation... which is good, because I have it frequently. In most cases, the rest of the consultation is spent reviewing technical details, surgery preparation, post-operative care, and photos of my other patients. During these twenty or so minutes, many patients will ask "When is the right time for a facelift." And the answer is it's different for every patient.

First, we should discuss what exactly is a facelift or a neck lift. These terms indicate a surgical procedure designed to lift and tighten the cheeks, jowls, and neck areas. Beyond that, there are myriad technical differences between surgeons and a lot of terminology created more for marketing than for medical or scientific clarity. For this reason, I specifically review the anatomy during the consultation, describe (and often draw on a photo) the planned incisions and areas of treatment, and show pictures of patients at different stages of recovery. Having a good understanding of your procedure will help you decide what the best time is for you.

Second, everyone ages a little differently. Genetic factors exert a heavy influence, and comparisons (favorable or otherwise) to parents are quite common during consultations. Environmental contributions, such as diet, exercise, sun exposure, habits and vices, are much easier to influence, but clearly affect each of us uniquely. Personal history also plays a role; events such as significant weight loss or treatment for severe illness can change your tissues or lead to premature signs of aging. The bottom line is that some patients have the anatomical, biological, readiness for a facelift or neck lift in their 40's while others are not ready until their 60's or even 70's. Waiting is always better than rushing into something without appropriate consideration. But there can be a downside in some cases. Delaying a desired surgery, solely to have waited, risks limiting the possibility of an ideal outcome. With advancing age comes slower healing, greater quantities of tissue to manipulate, and other health issues that may occur along the way and augment surgical risk.

Finally, the key to a successful facelift experience is emotional preparedness. Finding a good fit with your surgeon makes it easy for you to ask questions and address any concerns. The right time for a facelift or neck lift is when you are comfortable with your

surgeon and the plan, have allowed adequate time for recovery, and have worked around important events. Planning in advance for weddings, reunions, travel, or holidays will give you something to look forward to and remove unneeded stress. Making sure that you have a calm, stress-free recovery window will help your body to heal more quickly.

Facial cosmetic procedures, surgical and especially non-surgical, have become extremely prevalent. This attests to both their popularity and power to improve people's confidence and self-image. In the case of surgery, such as a facelift or neck lift, it is critically important to consider the context of your life. The right time for you may be earlier, or later, than that of a friend, colleague, or family member. There is not a universal "right time" - only the right time for you.



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Dr. Evan Ransom is an Ivy League-trained, double-board certified facial plastic surgeon. His practice includes surgery for the aging face, rhinoplasty (nose reshaping), and reconstruction after trauma or skin cancer removal. Dr. Ransom also provides minimally-invasive treatments, including Botox®, fillers, laser resurfacing, IPL, non-surgical tightening (ThermiTight™), and non-invasive body sculpting (SculpSure®).

Community service is very important to Dr. Ransom. He performs pro bono cleft lip and palate surgery with Healing the Children. Our next mission, to Peru, is in April 2018.

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