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**“The Eyes Have It”
By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS**

It's said that eyes are the “windows to the soul”. But sometimes, the view is significantly obscured by full, drooping eyelids or brows. Patients say they feel young and energetic on the inside, but all people see on the outside is a tired, stressed, worn-out expression.

Several kinds of invasive and non-invasive procedures can help change that.

For patients with excess, sagging skin above the upper eyelid fold, or sagging “bags” of fatty tissue beneath the eye, cosmetic eyelid surgery can restore a more youthful, alert look.

Let's start with the upper eyelids where lids that have become excessively full can often make the patient appear to be squinting. The surgical solution is to remove excess skin and fatty tissue. Incisions are made within the eyelid crease. The surgeon then carefully sculpts the fat and tailors the skin and muscle, closing the incisions with fine sutures.

To remedy under-eye “bags”, incisions are placed either immediately below the eyelashes where they are inconspicuous or inside the lower eyelids, depending upon the specific patient. Fatty tissue causing the puffy look is sculpted or repositioned to smooth the contour while minimizing any potential hollow appearance. Resurfacing with a chemical peel or laser is sometimes used on the skin of the lower eyelid to help minimize fine lines and wrinkles. Often, Botox/Dysport and/or fillers are also used to address crow's feet and enhance the overall results of the eyelid surgery.

The goal in eyelid surgery is to produce the most significant improvement possible within the bounds of utmost safety. Removing too much skin and fat can create a skeletal look and in rare cases, can make it difficult to close the eyes properly.

In some cases, puffy upper eyelids have occurred because the eyebrow has slipped below the orbital bone. For correction, a brow lift is sometimes done alone or combined with eyelid surgery.

For a brow lift, the less invasive endoscopic approach can often avoid the older traditional open approach associated with a long scar, hair loss and numbness. Typically, through 3-5 smaller incisions within the hair, an endoscope is used to visualize and free the attachments to bone, carefully reduce the heavy frown muscles and then the brow is lifted and repositioned upward to provide the necessary lift to increase the distance between the

brow and eyelashes. The brows are positioned to achieve maximum improvement without creating an overly startled or unnatural look.

The vast majority of patients report that discomfort is minimal with these out-patient eyelid and browlift surgeries and recovery is fairly rapid. There is some bruising and swelling for the first week or so, but after 7-10 days, most patients return to work and social activities, though strenuous activity should be avoided for 3-4 weeks. Sun exposure should be avoided.

For patients who don't want or need surgery but do want to see some improvement in the eye areas, several less invasive treatments can be very effective.

For frown lines or "crow's feet", Botox/Dysport can be used to relax muscles which constantly contract when you smile or frown, thus reinforcing the wrinkles. Restylane or other fillers can be used to fill in persistent wrinkles. These less invasive treatments are easily performed in the office with no downtime but are not permanent solutions and typically are repeated 1-2 times per year or more as needed.

Dark circles under the eyes are very difficult to treat with a myriad of "miracle" cures offered on line. Various bleaching creams can help to minimize them and repeated treatments are needed to produce noticeable results. Another option is with specialized lasers to target the vascular or pigment component of the discoloration to gain improvement, again with multiple treatments usually required.

Every patient's situation is different in terms of goals, skin quality and medical history. That's why an individual consultation with a board-certified plastic surgeon is the best way to begin the decision-making process about any invasive or less invasive cosmetic procedure. Many plastic surgeons in South Florida offer free initial consultations.

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