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To Look Your Best for that Special Upcoming Event: Careful Surgical Scheduling is Crucial

By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS

Is a June wedding or a summer class or family reunion on your 2010 calendar? If so, you might be considering having cosmetic surgery to help you look your best at the event. Good idea, but remember, timing is everything.

If you've researched your desired surgery online, you know that there are standard recovery times listed for each type of procedure. These guidelines provide a schedule of when the patient can expect swelling, bruising and/or pain to be resolved, how long before most patients are ready to return to work, and when aerobic activities can be resumed.

However, for many cosmetic procedures, such as facelift, eyelid/brow lift and even breast augmentation, improvement continues to occur for several months after the surgery. That means if you want to achieve the maximum results from your procedure before your big event, it's important to plan ahead.

First, plan to spend a week or two having consultations with several board certified plastic surgeons to get different opinions on surgical approaches and expected outcomes as well as to decide which surgeon and office support team you'll likely feel most comfortable with during the pre-op appointments and post-op follow-up.

Next, plan to leave time not only for initial recovery but for full improvement. Here are some examples:

. **Facelift.** There is some tightness in the neck area immediately after a facelift. This early tightness is necessary to produce the best possible results long-term. Most of the tight feeling fades entirely during the first 2-3 weeks after surgery. Bruising and swelling usually resolve in 5-10 days. Return to work & social activity can occur in 10-21 days and to aerobic or strenuous activity, 14-21 days. *However, maximum improvement is usually not seen until _____ months after surgery.*

. **Eyelid Surgery.** The typical recovery schedule is: Bruising and swelling, 5-14 days; return to work & social activity, 7-14 days; aerobic or strenuous activity, 14-21 days. *Maximum improvement may not be seen until ____ weeks/months after surgery.* It is imperative to avoid sun exposure during this time.

. **Breast Augmentation.** Augmented breasts will feel tight at first but the sensation fades over several days as swelling decreases. There may be slight bruising under the breasts a day or two after surgery but it will fade in about a week. Return to work and social activity can occur

2-3 days after surgery, with strenuous activity avoided for 3 weeks. Patients wear a special support bra for 2-3 weeks following the procedure. *While improvement is immediate, it may take _____ weeks to achieve the most natural, desired profile.*

While serious complications are uncommon with cosmetic surgery, it is ideal to factor some time into your pre-op schedule to deal with unanticipated circumstances. Cutting the schedule too close could cut into the enjoyment of your special event.

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