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A Cheeky New Facelift Technique That Will Leave You In Stitches (Not Bandages)

New York, NY 2003 - In plastic surgery, there are procedures targeted at restoring the structure or contour of the face and those designed to tighten the skin. When we are young, the cheek fat is situated high in the cheeks by the cheek bones. As we age, the fat and soft tissues beneath the facial skin gradually fall. They come to rest in undesirable locations. In the cheeks, the tissues that were once on the cheekbones slide down to the folds by the nose and mouth (the "nasolabial" folds). This makes the cheeks appear flat and the folds by the nose and mouth deepen. The same process pushes down the corners of the mouth, making it appear sad or angry. The downward pull of the cheek fat stretches the lower eyelids as well, making them appear drawn, sunken and tired. But mid-face aging is the predominant component of aging in younger women, in women who've had face-lifts and in middle-aged and older women. Traditional face-lift surgery does not adequately address this problem. **Enter the cheek lift.**

Dr. Russell Kridel is a Houston Board Certified Facial Plastic Surgeon who has been at the forefront of this new technique. As he explains, "the cheek-lift elevates the cheek fat pad carrying the skin with it in the middle portion of the face and it adds volume to the mid part of the face. It's done by making two needle marks, leaving a little puncture that heals easily and quickly. Through those needle puncture sites, we place two suture loops with a needle up into the temple, where the sutures are anchored, and with those loops we're able to pull the cheek fat pad up like a puppet string, lifting the middle portion of the face. Unlike with traditional facelift surgery, the skin is lifted but not removed. When the fat pad is at the desired level it is tied down. For the patient, this means no risk of hematoma, substantially less bruising, discomfort and recovery time." For those who associate plastic surgery post-op with looking like 'The Bride of Frankenstein,' there are no bandages.

Those men and women with the following characteristics are candidates for this procedure:

- **Deepening of the folds or creases by the nose and mouth**
- **Flattening of the cheeks**
- **Sunken or fallen facial appearance**
- **A sad, angry or down turned appearance of the mouth**
- **Hollows or bags beneath the eyes**

As Dr. Kridel explains, "good candidates are younger women who are at the first plateau of facial aging (35-45); women from 45 to 55 who mainly have mid-facial aging; women who are older and who've previously had a face-lift but find that the middle portion of their face is still sagging. Men often show the first signs in the face with sagging cheeks and deepening nasolabial folds. Men are particularly good candidates in that they often require little recovery time. People of any age who are primarily concerned with facial aging in the middle portion (nasolabial cheekfolds) of the face could benefit from this procedure. Those who would not be candidates include people with sagging necks or skin

that hangs below the jaw. But sometimes the cheek-lift procedure can be combined with a procedure like the neck lift, so a patient has two smaller procedures instead of a larger one which means they can still recuperate more rapidly." The recovery for a cheeklift is much shorter and much easier than the recovery for a facelift. Since there is no skin tightened or adjusted during cheek lift surgery, there are no lengthy incisions. Most patients return to normal activities in a week to ten days.

Has the traditional face-lift seen its last day?

"No, the traditional face-lift isn't obsolete yet," says Dr. Kridel, but these smaller procedures, like the cheek-lift, give people many other options by more specifically targeting a patient's aging process and doing only as much as we need to without doing more." Good news for patients, as a cheek lift is a fraction of the cost of a full facelift.

The cheeklift does improve the laugh lines that stretch from the nose to the mouth (in the nasolabial fold). It appears that this procedure holds, on average, for at least five years although it could last longer. It is important to remember that it took many years for cheek fat to slip downwards before a procedure so it will take many years for it to do so again. Significant weight changes, smoking and sun exposure may accelerate the aging of the cheeks.

Good-Bye wind tunnel look-"A cheeklift gives patients a more refreshed look rather than a radical change in appearance, says Dr. Kridel. He adds, "the face is not being pulled taut, but lifted. Because the skin is not cut or pulled, patients need not worry about that dreaded tight skeletal look. The procedure does just the opposite- it actually restores the volume that patients loose with age."

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