

FACIAL SURGERY: FOLLOWING-UP WITH LOCAL PROVIDERS

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If you are reading this, it likely means that a patient of yours is either preparing for or recently had gender-affirming facial surgery with The Gender Confirmation Center in San Francisco. This means the patient identifies as trans, non-binary, and/or gender-diverse, and sought facial surgery to ease their feelings of incongruence between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.

Please get approval from your patient to communicate with our staff about how to help coordinate with us and get in touch with us at (415) 780-1515 so we are aware that you are going to support the healing journey of one of our mutual patients. Use this reference sheet as a guide to help you learn more about gender affirming facial surgery.

GENDER INCLUSIVITY

Many professionals in the medical field may have experience working with members of the trans, non-binary, and gender diverse communities, but some may not. In case you have not yet had the experience of working with the trans community, here is some important information informed by [10 Tips for Working With Trans People](#) by the [Transgender Law Center](#):

1. TREAT MEMBERS OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY THE WAY YOU WOULD WANT TO BE TREATED.

Trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Relax, be courteous, and speak to trans patients just like you would to any other patient.

2. MAKE SURE YOU USE THE RIGHT NAME, GENDER PRONOUNS, AND GENDERED LANGUAGE.

Often, trans people might use a different name than their legal/birth name and might have a negative response to being referred to by the wrong name. The same goes for pronoun use. If you are unsure, it is ok to ask politely for the name and pronouns they'd like you to use during your visit together. If you misgender someone by referring to them with the wrong gender pronouns, simply apologize, correct yourself, and carry on your conversation. Avoid apologizing profusely or drawing unnecessary attention to the situation; this may make your patient more uncomfortable.

3. KEEP YOUR CONVERSATIONS FOCUSED ON THEIR CARE.

Do not turn this visit into an opportunity to learn more about the trans community or about your patient's gender history other than as directly related to the reason they have come to you for a visit. Similarly, if you do not need to know about a trans person's experiences with surgery outside the reason they have come to your office, do not ask.



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4. NEVER DISCLOSE A TRANS PERSON'S GENDER HISTORY WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT.

Just like with all protected and private health information, a trans person's health records and gender history are not to be disclosed with other people unless you are given explicit permission.

5. LEARN MORE ABOUT HEALTHCARE ISSUES IMPACTING THE WIDER TRANS COMMUNITY.

Taking it upon yourself to learn more about healthcare issues that impact the trans community is a great step toward providing your own gender-affirming care. Learn more at www.project-health.org/transline.

FACIAL SURGERY FAQ

Gender-affirming facial surgery involves multiple procedures having to do with the skin, soft tissues, and bones in the face. Recovery from facial surgery may last longer than patients expect, so we compiled a short list of frequently asked questions to help guide you through your patient's recovery. For more reading, check out our informational articles at genderconfirmation.com.

HOW LONG DOES RECOVERY TAKE?

Recovery depends greatly upon the amount and types of facial procedures that any one patient has. Patients are usually cleared for work no later than 6 weeks after their surgery and are considered "fully recovered" at that point, although it is completely normal to have significant swelling well after this. We recommend postponing any competitive/contact sports or any yoga/stretching with prolonged inversions until around 3 months after surgery. Facial surgery incisions are considered healed at the 12 month mark after surgery but will continue to heal for 18 months after surgery.

HOW LONG WILL CHANGES IN SENSATION LAST?

Often, patients will report feeling a tightness in their face that may take some getting used to. Face tightness is typically described as discomfort associated with moving certain areas of the face and the need to re-learn certain facial movements. This usually resolves around 1-2 months after surgery.

Another common change in sensation has to do with [hairline advancement](#). Patients may experience numbness, tingling, phantom pains, or itchiness on the scalp or other areas of the face. Some patients find that using their fingers to put some light pressure on the scalp may alleviate some of the itchy and tingling feelings. These sensations may last for up to 6 months after surgery.

WHAT WOULD NECESSITATE A VISIT TO THE ER?

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Excessive bleeding from incision
- Lightheadedness
- Rapid onset swelling in any area of the body

WHAT ARE THE POST-OP RECOVERY MILESTONES?

Patients may not smoke anything or consume nicotine products for 6 weeks after surgery. Patients who use marijuana are urged to switch to edibles or tinctures/oil during this time to limit any smoke inhalation which can inhibit incision healing. Patients may not drink alcohol until they are off prescription pain medication.

Patients should find ways to move their bodies regularly after surgery to help reduce the risk of blood clots. They are recommended to go on short walks around their house or neighborhood but should not do anything to increase the heart rate or make them sweat until 6 weeks after surgery. Patients who had a frontal sinus setback or rhinoplasty should be on sinus precautions for the first three weeks after surgery; these include limiting bending over, blowing the nose and anything that would replicate a valsalva maneuver and increase pressure in the head.

HOW DO PATIENTS CARE FOR FACIAL INCISIONS?

External incisions are made around the hairline and under the nose, and under the chin. For the first week after surgery, patients must use antibiotic ointment on their scars twice a day. Starting about 3 weeks after surgery, patients should massage silicone gel into their scars twice a day. Patients should continue to apply silicone scar gel to their scars for the first year after surgery. These incisions also need to be protected from the sun during the first year after surgery using a combination of physical barriers (hats, umbrellas, etc.) and chemical barriers (zinc oxide).

Internal incisions are sometimes made in the mouth for mandible contouring and genioplasty. Patients should use mouthwash twice daily after their meals to help make sure that they are clearing the incision area of all food remnants. For an even cleaner option, patients may use a water flosser on a low setting to gently clean their mouth incisions once a day. Once the incisions have healed considerably, around 3-5 days after surgery, patients can begin brushing their teeth with a soft toothbrush. Patients should also eat a soft [low-sodium](#) diet for 2 weeks.

WHAT KINDS OF BRUISING AND SWELLING IS NORMAL AFTER FACIAL SURGERY?

Usually, bruising after facial surgery peaks 48-72 hours after surgery and will last for about 2 to 3 weeks. Bruising will most often appear under the eyes, even if the patient did not have any eyelid or orbital bone procedures.

Swelling may last longer depending on the amount and location of [procedures](#) a patient had. Generally, swelling increases as you move down the face. Similar to bruising, swelling will peak in the first week after surgery and usually will not be completely resolved for about 6 months.

Patients can do the following to expedite their healing process: sleeping at an incline for their first week after surgery; avoid leaning over; stop smoking and use of all nicotine products for 6 weeks after surgery; avoid certain NSAIDs and blood thinning medications; and eat a low sodium diet.

As always, if you have any more questions for us about facial surgery recovery or want to work with us to coordinate a patient's aftercare, please contact us at (415) 780-1515 to speak with Dr. Facque.