

face

Advanced Techniques

THE COMPOSITE FACELIFT CAN GIVE PATIENTS A NATURAL-LOOKING, LONG-LASTING RESULT, SAYS CANBERRA PLASTIC SURGEON **DR VLAD MILOVIC**.
JENNI GILBERT REPORTS.

Traditional or conventional facelifting techniques don't necessarily take into account the fact the face ages as a single, dynamic unit, rather than as a series of static, independent parts. Over time, traditional facelifts can therefore lead to a tight, unnatural-looking appearance. Recent advances in facelifting techniques have helped surgeons achieve more natural-looking results for their patients.

Based in Canberra, plastic surgeon Dr Vladimir Milovic has adapted his approach to facelifting to achieve results that stand the test of time. He believes that the composite facelift technique, when combined with adjunct procedures such as neck lifting and advanced upper blepharoplasty where required, can achieve the most natural-looking, long-lasting results.

'The composite facelift is a next-generation alternative to standard procedures,' says Dr Milovic. 'It is a sophisticated technique that requires experience to perform, but it can successfully restore a youthful appearance.'

While other procedures only reposition facial tissue horizontally, the composite lift counters the natural descent of the face with a vertical lift.

The composite facelift is similar to a deep plane lift, with the addition of an extra step to include the muscle around the eyelid. A deep plane lift is designed to reshape the entire face, including the upper and lower eyelids, the brow and the neck, by lifting facial tissues, fat, muscle and skin in one continuous section. The dissection is deep, and goes below the superficial musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS), releasing strategic face and neck muscles and reattaching them at higher anchor points. The fat remains attached to the overlying tissues.

The deep plane facelift was developed as a modification to standard facelifting techniques in order to better address characteristics of ageing in the mid-face. As well as restoring volume to the mid-face, with the deep plane lift, improvements to deep nasolabial folds can also be achieved.

Like the deep plane lift, the composite lift involves the elevation and resection of the SMAS layer, as well as the orbicularis muscle and cheek fat pad. During the lift, the orbicularis oculi muscle (around the eye) is separated from its attachment to the cheekbone through an incision in the lower eyelid and then lifted and sutured into place.

'The whole face can be lifted to achieve more youthful contours without that telltale "pulled" appearance that people might experience with conventional procedures,' says Dr Milovic.

Dr Milovic explains that, as well as creating a smoother neck and more defined jawline, the composite lift can recreate the full, plump cheeks of youth – something that can't be achieved with other facelifting techniques alone. An added advantage is that the composite lift also helps blend the dividing line between the lower eyelid and cheek, which can appear with age.

In traditional facelifting techniques, the surgeon pulls the skin outward to gain access to the underlying muscle and connective tissue. The tissue is then repositioned and tightened. Some fat may also be removed or repositioned at this point. Composite facelifting provides balance between vertical and horizontal lifting thus providing a more holistic result.

Depending on the patient, Dr Milovic will therefore commonly perform a neck lift in conjunction with the composite lift in order to achieve an overall, rejuvenated and youthful appearance. 'You can't separate the face from the neck – there must be unity for balance,' he explains.

In some patients, Dr Milovic may also perform an endoscopic brow lift, although, in most cases the desired effect can be achieved with injections of botulinum toxin.

In order to achieve the most natural-looking results for his patients, Dr Milovic has embraced a more advanced upper blepharoplasty (eye lift) technique, pioneered by Melbourne plastic surgeon Dr Bryan Mendelson. Using the technique, he has experienced some outstanding results.

Whereas many people believe the problem with drooping upper eyelids is excess skin, Dr Milovic explains this is often not the case. 'What has actually occurred is that the skin has detached from its former position deep within the eyelid, where it used to appear as a neat fold of skin,' he explains. 'When detachment occurs, the neat, clean contour above the eye can be obscured by the drooping skin.'

'This procedure requires only a short incision in the eye fold, which heals so that it is undetectable within four months, even with the eyes closed.'

Dr Milovic believes this technique avoids the risks associated with traditional blepharoplasty. When 'excess skin' is cut away from the upper eyelids, there is always the risk of taking too much, giving the patient a taut, 'surprised' look, leaving them unable to close their eyes properly.

'By combining the composite facelift with more advanced blepharoplasty techniques, and other adjunct procedures where necessary, patients can look younger for longer, with very little change even 10 years after surgery,' Dr Milovic concludes. **csbm**

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