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WANT A LIFT?

Is There Really Such a Thing as a Mini Facelift?

Facelift patients are getting younger, and facelifts themselves are getting an overhaul: So-called “mini” facelifts appeal to patients in their 40s...but what exactly is a mini facelift, and is it too good to be true?

BY KARA NESVIG

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Facelifts were up (pun very much intended) 18% in 2022. As this ultimate of skin-tightening procedures — and the patient demographic getting them — evolves, Allure is exploring the phenomenon of the modern facelift in our new series, [Want a Lift?](#)

Everything is so much more charming when it’s miniaturized: a teeny-tiny Diet Coke can, the utterly impractical Jacquemus Le Chiquito bag. Or the “mini facelift”—the [Baked by Melissa](#) cupcake of plastic surgery, if you will. But how much can you actually downsize a [procedure](#) that involves scalpels and your face?

While [mini facelifts](#) aren’t a brand-new concept, they are gaining in popularity as more patients in their 40s, ready to move on from [filler](#) but not quite ready for a full-on [facelift](#), ask about their options. A frequent answer: the mini facelift. It can be called by more technical-sounding monikers, including the limited-incision [facelift](#) or short-scar facelift, or even breezier ones, like the “weekend facelift.” (For the record, you will not, we repeat not, recover in one weekend from any facelift.) Whatever the name, the concept is certainly intriguing: a “junior” version of a facelift that’s easier on you, with a subtler result.

Is a mini facelift just good marketing of a major surgery?

But when anything in the aesthetics world sounds too good to be true, we have questions. So we called six plastic surgeons to get every last one answered. Starting with: Is a [mini facelift](#) just good marketing of a major [surgery](#)?

Meet the experts:

- [Adam Kolker](#), MD, is a board-certified plastic surgeon in New York City.

Is there actually such a thing as a mini facelift?

A [facelift](#) of any variety is always a big commitment. One could argue that’s especially true if you’re on the younger side (late 30s or 40s) and just want a little lifting and tightening from a mini facelift. We’re talking about relatively small changes for a procedure that requires moving your skin and tissue around.

But in short, yes. Mini facelifts do indeed exist. Just don’t let the word mini fool you. Because it’s also true that they require incisions that create scars (usually, these are hidden near the ear), and repositioning and redraping of deep facial tissue and skin. And you won’t exactly hop up off the operating room table right after and go out to dinner. You can expect to hunker down for about two weeks of [swelling](#).

So, what is a mini facelift?

In the simplest terms, a mini facelift is a procedure for lifting mild to moderate sagging on the lower third of the face—the kind you get when you first start to notice a little bit of laxity along your [jawline](#). While it’s true that there is less surgical work (e.g., repositioning of tissue) involved with a mini facelift than a traditional one, the mini is more like a little sister to the full-size version rather than a no-big-deal, weekend procedure.

In a full [facelift](#), the surgeon might address facial sagging or jowls (on the cheeks or jaw), deep wrinkles (around the mouth), and laxity or excess fat along the jawline and on the neck all in one go. To do that, the surgeon will make an incision that begins at the hairline near the temple and follows it down around the ear and back into the hairline. In contrast, a mini facelift is concentrated on the lower third of the face and requires a shorter incision, usually just around the ears and at the hairline right above the ears, where sideburns might be. Done well, “the incisions are inconspicuous,” says [Adam Kolker](#), MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon in New York City. (They should also be inconspicuous when surgeons start farther up in the hairline during a traditional facelift.)



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But, as a general rule, in order to lift mild to moderate sagging on the lower face, jowl, or upper neck during a mini facelift, “the facial skin is lifted conservatively and the underlying inelastic deep tissue plane, known as SMAS, is repositioned,” says Dr. Kolker. In a good mini facelift, “the skin is redraped, gently and naturally taut, but never tight. Excess skin is trimmed, and the incisions are closed with fine sutures under no tension,” he explains.

Can you combine a mini facelift with other procedures?

The short answer is yes. It’s not uncommon for patients to get a [brow lift](#) or [blepharoplasty](#) while they’re under anesthesia for a mini facelift, says Dr. Kolker. Some patients will also add neck liposuction to help define the chin since a mini facelift doesn’t pull tightly enough to resculpt the jawline. Of course, when you start adding on surgeries to get the results you want, a mini facelift doesn’t feel so mini anymore. For example, [blepharoplasty](#) is often followed by the results to three weeks of swelling around the eyes, and patients wear supportive chin straps for a few days after getting lipo under the chin.