

En bloc Deep Plane Facelift

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There are numerous face lift techniques described in the literature.

In essence, all aim to address these main issues:

1. **Resuspend** the superficial musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS) (with or without release of the facial retaining ligaments)
2. **Reposition** the ptotic facial fat compartments
3. **Remove** excess skin

I've recently had the invaluable opportunity of spending the last one and a half years overseas working with numerous internationally renowned facial plastic surgeons in the United Kingdom, Europe and Asia, learning both the deep plane and traditional SMAS face lift techniques. My goal was to determine which technique provided the **most effective, natural looking results**, whilst still being **safe and minimising the down time** for patients.

I found my answer whilst working with two very busy facial plastic surgeons in the Netherlands, who now use the en bloc deep plane face lift technique after many years of trialling various others.

Why do I prefer the en bloc deep plane technique?

Firstly, the deep plane technique involves dissection beneath the SMAS layer, enabling the surgeon to release deeper structures, including the facial retaining ligaments. This allows greater lifting and repositioning of ptotic fat compartments, whilst still **maintaining natural results** as no tension is placed on the skin. Lifting the ptotic fat compartments helps to **restore volume in its youthful space**, reducing the need for concurrent fat grafting. The SMAS flap is repositioned and anchored onto stable structures in the face, helping to provide **longer lasting results**.

Additionally, as the skin and SMAS layers are treated as one component, subcutaneous dissection is greatly reduced. The enbloc deep plane technique involves even less subcutaneous dissection compared to the traditional deep plane technique, minimising further the risk of superficial contour irregularities, bruising as well as swelling. This translates to less down time for patients. The technique is particularly advantageous in thin patients with little subcutaneous fat.

Some surgeons are concerned about the theoretically higher risk of facial nerve damage given the deeper plane of dissection. However, with a combination of safe surgical dissection techniques and sound anatomical knowledge, this risk can be minimised. Multiple studies, including a 2019 meta-analysis (AA Jacono 2019), demonstrated no increased risk of permanent nerve injury between the two methods, with reported injury rates of less than one percent.

Ultimately, I don't believe one method is superior to the other. A well-trained surgeon, competent in a particular technique, should be able to achieve the desired result.

However, the en bloc deep plane technique corresponds best to my surgical philosophy, and in my hands, provides the most effective, safe and natural looking results.

This piece was brought to you by Dr Miguel Cabalag.

For more information or to answer any questions please feel free to call 03 85602999 or email enquiries@horizonplasticsurgery.com

References

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