

BROW LIFT

Most patients that come to the office that benefit from a brow lift will tell me that they look tired or angry and that is generally because the brows descend below the rim of the eye, and it is important to know some of the ideal aesthetics,. For one, the eyebrow at least in a woman should be above the rim of the eye. Men can get away with little more of descent than a woman, but that is generally what we are looking for when we look at the brow position. So, they have angered appearance, a tired appearance, and often they will say I look so much happier when they manually raise my eyebrows with a finger to simulate them sitting higher on the forehead. That is essentially what a browlift does.

A brow lift will elevate the brow and actually even reshape the eyebrows to sometimes more of an arch to give a more rested appearance and youthful appearance to the face.

We do not want to make the patient look “surprised” and that is one of the downsides of a browlift (if performed too aggressively), but we do want to elevate the eyebrows into a position above the rim that is pleasant looking and youthful looking.

A lot of patients will come in and ask for Botox to lift their eyebrows. While it is true that you can put Botox around the eyes and maybe elevate the lateral brow a little bit and change the shape, it is not as powerful as a browlift, so Botox will not elevate the brow like a browlift, and in fact, if too much Botox is injected into the forehead, it will drop the brow.

So, when women or men come in and they have already low set eyebrows and they have really deep wrinkles in their forehead, this must be recognized as a potential problem when it comes to Botox.

Essentially, low set eyebrows with very deep transverse forehead wrinkles may mean that at rest they may be constantly using that muscle (frontalis muscle) to keep their brow up. Thus, if you weaken it with Botox and that is what Botox does, it paralyzes or weakens the muscles, the brows come down. If they drop too much it can create an angry or tired appearance, the exact opposite of the intended goal.

Brow lifts exist in the endoscopic form and an open form. The endoscopic approach is where small incisions are made in the hair-bearing region of the scalp, and from under the skin, the brows are internally released from their position and weakened so we can still move them, and then they are supported with internal supports called anchors to a higher level on the forehead.

We have a lot of control over some of the shape and position of the brows through that approach, and the nice thing about that approach is there are really no visible scars and is a very safe operation.

The open approach is different. This was generally done exclusively for brow elevation years ago until before the endoscopic approach became popular. In the open approach, incisions are made either (through the scalp where the hairline starts or in the mid scalp, ear-to-ear) and dissection is carried down to the eyebrow and the tissues are elevated to raise the brow.

The downside to this surgical approach is it leaves a scar all the way across your head. In a man that could be very visible if he develops hair loss. The other disadvantage is that it can also raise the hairline, and we know raising the hairline imparts in aged appearance. For women who already have a high hairline, the pretrichial (incision at the hairline) brow lift can be performed, which is an open brow lift that starts at the existing hairline. This type of brow lift can both raise the eyebrow AND lower the hairline.

So, the ideal candidate (for a pretrichial) would be a woman with already a high hairline. Again, through this approach, we can actually resect skin below the hairline, raise the brow, and reduce the forehead (a forehead reduction) combined with a brow lift. The disadvantage again is the scar it may leave. Now, if they heal very well, it is fantastic. If they do not heal well, there could be a problem if the scar becomes visible. (Thus, a history of scar potential should be addressed as this is a factor in the decision making of a brow lift, or forehead reduction).

The other issue with these approaches when we are making these incisions across the scalp is potential numbness or even some pain in the area that can be actually lasts months to sometimes in rare cases permanent, so they are not without their downsides. For the most part, the endoscopic brow lift has become more popular than the traditional open approaches, but there is a role still for open approaches in the right person.

The results are generally immediate. There will be some overcorrection possibly with the brow lift (meaning the brows will be initially raised higher than the desired level) because it will descend a bit overtime. The final result will be seen maybe a month or two after surgery. But for the most part off the operating room table you will look refreshed.

TAKE HOME POINT: There are several ways to lift the eyebrows. The procedure chosen should consider the size of the forehead and scar potential.