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I Got Lower Blepharoplasty Surgery For My Undereye Bags & The Results Are Jaw-Dropping

Kate Auletta | June 16, 2023



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I'm one of those women who found themselves at a pandemic-induced gray hair crossroads. Until 2020, my stray gray hairs were nothing I couldn't handle with the occasional dye job. But quite suddenly and drastically, I found myself pandemically homebound and going hyper-gray, at least partly against my will. The stress of it all made those silver strands spread like wildfire. Three years later, I find myself full-on salt-and-pepper and I've come to accept it. But while I'm fine with my gray hair, I am very much not OK with the way my face is aging. Last summer, on the eve of a milestone birthday, I found myself staring at a face in the mirror that I didn't totally recognize. I've always had crow's feet, which, sure, bother me a bit, but they're as much a result of the way I smile as they are of age. Instead, I found myself particularly drawn to the excessive bags that had taken up residence under my eyes, and wondering if I should do something about it.

I've always had dark circles, but the puffiness, no matter what I ate or drink, was a relatively new phenomenon that seemed to age me well beyond my 40 years. And I had had enough — enough of looking older, of searching for the “perfect” concealer (seriously, I've tried them all) that would hide the circles, of feeling extremely self-conscious. Since having my kids, I've adapted to wearing one-pieces instead of bikinis and high-waisted jeans to cover my C-section shelf. This was increasingly something I was not OK compromising on.



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So, after a summer of celebrating and traveling, I went to a reputable spa to ask for fillers to help my eyes, in hopes of camouflaging the chaos underneath them. Instead, I was told in no uncertain terms that adding filler under my eyes would make me look immensely worse as my problem wasn't just excess skin, it was fat. My only recourse was likely a lower blepharoplasty, also known as lower eyelid surgery, in which a doctor "physically removes the fat and skin away from the eyes," [Dr. Steven Williams](#), M.D., of Tri Valley Plastic Surgery in Dublin, California, told me over the phone when I started doing research.

It took me a beat to reconcile this. Surgery was much more involved than I had anticipated; I thought I could throw some quick money at the problem via fillers or intense Botox and move on (cosmetic surgery is, needless to say, something I don't know much about). I'm all for a woman doing whatever she wants with her body — reproductively, cosmetically, you name it. But was I really ready to go the cosmetic surgery route? I took a few months to watch my face and see if this was really something I wanted.

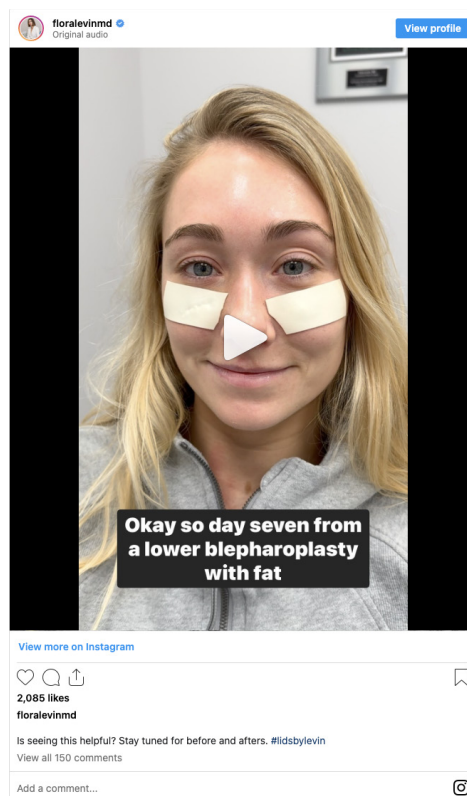
Turns out, the incessant puffiness and the way it seemed to age me in ways the gray hair didn't wasn't something I wanted to live with. Give me my grays; keep the facial aging away, please. So I asked my friend, Dr. Dara Liotta, M.D., a New York City-based plastic surgeon who specializes in rhinoplasty, for a recommendation for a lower bleph. She highly suggested Dr. Flora Levin, M.D., an oculofacial plastic surgeon based in Westport, Connecticut.

What Is Blepharoplasty Surgery?

Blepharoplasties are among the top five procedures performed by plastic surgeons, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. And there's a good reason for that: When I went in for my consultation this winter, Levin described the surgery to me as "scarless," since the incision is made inside the eyelid. The purpose of a lower bleph is to "improve the contour of the lower lids, [including] the bags and dark circles, and create a smooth transition between the eyelid and the cheek," Levin told me.

Unlike, say, lasering the skin away, “blepharoplasties should really be a permanent improvement. What I tell our patients is it doesn’t stop the process of aging; time continues to march on but it’s something that you’re permanently making a difference to,” Williams adds. Both Levin and Williams agreed that blepharoplasties are, generally speaking, performed on people over 40, like me, and are mostly women. After all, Williams told me, “Things like having children and getting less sleep can affect your lower eyelids.” Ding, ding, ding, jackpot.

When I asked why fillers wouldn’t work for people like me, Levin told me that “the best candidates for fillers are those with no bags, only hollows, and excellent skin tone. Once there are bags, fillers do not work as they add volume rather than address the problem of excess. Surgery can do both: remove the excess and correct the hollows. I use the ‘speed bump and pothole’ analogy.”



Getting Lower Blepharoplasty Surgery

Convinced that this was something I really wanted to do for myself, I booked the surgery and started asking more questions. By the day of my surgery, I was armed with information: no contact lenses for at least a week, to ice for 20 minutes every hour for the first 48 hours, to sleep as upright as possible, and that I’d be in “mild pain” and would have to take the rest of the week off work. I had been taking arnica and Bromelain for swelling and bruising in the days leading up to the surgery, and would be on a cocktail of medications for about a week afterwards.

The surgery lasted about an hour and a half, which I was told is typical. When I came to, I was groggy but not in the slightest bit of pain. My eyes were very swollen, and I felt like I had just taken a not-very-useful nap.



My face pre-op. Courtesy of Kate Auletta

My Recovery From Lower Blepharoplasty Surgery

Upon arriving home, my eyes were certainly puffy, but I felt no pain. I was, however, very sensitive to light and my eyes felt dry. That night, my eyes were scratchy. If you're a contact lens wearer, you'll know the feeling: as though you've put your contact in wrong. I did take a painkiller to help me sleep since my eyes were so scratchy, and woke up scratch-free in the morning.

I was told pre-surgery that the swelling gets worse in the 48 to 72 hours post-operation, which certainly held true for me. On day two, my eyes were so puffy, even seeing proved to be a challenge. I had thought that I would defy the odds and be able to work, but that proved impossible.

As someone who had two C-sections in three years, I'm not used to recovery from surgery being this painless. Sure, it's tedious because you're homebound, you look a bit scary to kids (though I did play the "funny sunglasses who-can-spot-my-eyes" game with my son's friends at pickup), and you can't do much (which, like so many of us, I'm not particularly good at), but the lack of pain was very weird for me.



Day of the surgery. Courtesy of Kate Auletta



Day three post-op. Courtesy of Kate Auletta

By day three, the puffiness was much better, likely helped by my dutiful icing. Over the course of the next few days, my eyes were still dry and tired easily. The bandages that covered my eyes became the most annoying part; it was hard to smile or laugh in that first week with them. I kept a short log of my recovery and wrote that the most annoying thing by far was the inability to wear contacts — glasses make my eyes feel way more tired than they are — and to properly wash my face, a dab of micellar water had to do the trick for a week. Not bad, all things considered.

Things improved from there. I got the bandages off one week post-surgery. The puffiness steadily improved over the days, though I couldn't wear contacts until 12 days post-op. And now, nearly four weeks post-surgery, my eyes look so much better. I barely have to wear concealer, the puffiness is gone, but I do have intermittent swelling, usually in the mornings, which Levin says is totally normal and to be expected.

All in all, Levin told me my results would be close to complete by early September, so roughly four(ish) months post-surgery. She mentioned that younger patients, those in their 20s and 30s for instance, tend to see results sooner, while those of us who are older (yay age!) tend to take a bit longer.



One week post-op. Courtesy of Kate Auletta



Two weeks post-op. Courtesy of Kate Auletta

How I Feel Roughly Two Months Post-Surgery

When all is said and done, I'm so over-the-top pleased with the results and my decision to do the surgery. My morning routine is much simpler — a quick dash (really, promise!) of undereye concealer, mostly in the inner corners, is all it takes to make my eyes look presentable now, which is a far cry from what it used to be. Sure, my wrinkles are still there, and I still look my age. Even though I know plastic surgery isn't the answer for everyone, nor is it necessarily good to put this much onus on it, I feel infinitely more confident in my appearance.



Three weeks post-op. Courtesy of Kate Auletta

Everybody, if they're lucky, gets to age. And I plan on otherwise aging gracefully. But this surgery gave me that extra boost I needed as I barrel towards my 42nd year. And for that, I am grateful.

<https://www.thezoereport.com/beauty/lower-blepharoplasty-before-and-after>