Kimberly Lee MD
Beverly Hills Facial Plastic Surgery Center

THE
Get Clear Beauty
PODCAST

Not Your Grandma's Facelift | Dr. Kimberly Lee

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Dr. Kimberly Lee trained at Stanford Medical School and did her residency in head and neck surgery at UCLA, which is where she learned the face layer by layer. She never expected to work in aesthetics. As chief resident, a woman whose face had been mauled by a bear was helicoptered into her emergency room, and she put it back together so well that you cannot tell today that it happened. That surgery is what sent her into facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. She now operates above the collarbone only, out of Beverly Hills Facial Plastic Surgery.

A facelift is not a skin pull. Pull the skin on its own and the tension stretches it straight back out, so what she repositions and tightens is the muscular layer underneath, called the SMAS, and the extra skin is draped on top and removed with no tension left on it. Deep plane, the one everybody is arguing about online, goes beneath that layer and releases some of the ligaments holding the tissue in place so it can be moved further. Her read on the argument is that there is no single facelift that is right for every face, so the technique is decided at the consultation, not in advance. She is just as clear about what a facelift does not do. It does not put volume back in the cheeks and it does not take away fine lines around the eyes and mouth, which is why it is usually one part of a plan that also includes volume restoration or skin resurfacing. Plenty of patients arrive asking for one because of something they saw online, and what they are reading as sagging turns out to be volume loss, in which case she says so rather than operating.

We also cover why patients now arrive in their forties and what preventative means at that age, whether you really only get three facelifts in a lifetime (she has a patient on her third, one a decade), exactly where the incisions sit and why she hides them in the tragus and inside the hairline, the awake facelift and what decides whether it is safe for you, recovery week by week including when you can wash your hair and the patient who went to a black tie event three weeks out, the facial nerve every patient should ask their surgeon about before booking, what separates a natural result from an overdone one, and on price, why the advertised numbers vary so wildly, what a quote from her practice covers (the surgeon's fee, the operating room and the anesthesia) and what it does not (medications, pre-op bloodwork and post-op recovery care), and why she tells patients who cannot afford it yet to save up rather than go cheap.

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