Facial Feminization Surgery (FFS)

Overview

During puberty, testosterone causes many changes in MTF bodies, including development of the skull and face bones, as well as cartilage in the face and neck. After puberty, although hormone therapy can make the skin of the face look softer and can bring about minor changes to the fat/muscle structure of the face, the basic structure of the face and neck can’t be changed by hormones; only surgery can reshape the contours of bone and cartilage.

MTFs have varying beliefs about face and neck surgery. Some feel it is very important in helping reduce their gender dysphoria and helping with possibility. Others are concerned that MTFs may feel pressure to get face and neck surgery to conform with conventional standards of attractiveness for women. Like any other type of SRS, there is no right or wrong answer in terms of whether to get face or neck surgery: it is a personal decision.

FFS includes two types of techniques: surgery on the bones or cartilages of the skull, or work on the soft tissue that covers the bone/cartilage. Bone reconstruction in FFS is based on the differences between the average “male” and “female” skull. Soft tissue work may be done to amplify the work done on bone, or instead of bone reconstruction, if relatively minor changes are sought. Soft tissue work is less invasive than bone reconstruction.

FFS can include surgical changes to any of the following areas:

Forehead

FFS creator Douglas Ousterhout emphasizes surgical change of the forehead as a key part of facial “feminization,” based on three differences in the facial structure of non-trans women and men:

1. As the pictures on the right show, “males” tend to have a relatively flat slope from the hairline to the eyebrows, while “female” skulls tend to be more curved.

2. As the pictures on the right show, “males” tend to have a heavier bony ridge just above the eyes (brow bossing).

3. “Males” tend to have a longer distance from their eyebrows to their hairline than “females,” even without “male”-pattern balding Typical “male” Typical “female” (which further increases this distance).

The surgical changes to the forehead that can be done as part of FFS include:

- **brow shave:** grinding down the orbital rims (upper edge of eye sockets) to remove brow bossing
- **forehead implant:** using synthetic bone-filler to round out a flat forehead
- **forehead reconstruction:** removing part of the skull, reshaping it, and replacing it (using wires/screws to hold the new bone in place)
- **brow lift:** tightening of the skin on the forehead and raising of the eyebrows
- **scalp advancement:** bringing the scalp and hairline forward
Chin and jaws

FFS creator Douglas Ousterhout describes three differences in the structure of chins and jaws of non-trans women and men:

1. As the pictures on the right show, “male” chins tend to be wider and more square, while “female” chins tend to be pointed and narrower.

2. The length from the bottom lip to the base of the chin tends to be shorter in “females” than in “males.”

3. The back corners of “male” jaws tend to be fuller, with the bone tending to have a sharper angle and flaring out away from the face, and a more prominent masseter (chewing) muscle. “Female jaws” tend to have a gradual curve from ear to chin, with a less square and full shape in the back. Typical “male” Typical “female”

Chin and jaw FFS is done through the mouth, via incisions around the lower gums. The surgical changes to the chin and jaw that can be done as part of FFS include:

- removing bone from the back corner of the jaw, possibly with removal of part of the masseter muscle to make it less prominent
- removing bone from the chin and reshaping it so it looks more tapered, less square, and shorter
- using implants or bone-filler paste if the chin is receding
- surgical rotation of the jaw: clockwise rotation pushes the chin and back corner of the jaw back, making them look smaller
- liposuction under the chin to make the lower part of the face look less heavy

Nose

Surgery to change the appearance of the nose is called rhinoplasty. Some MTFs want their nostrils or the tip of their nose to look different. Other times surgery on the bridge of the nose will be recommended to MTFs who are having forehead surgery, so the flow from nose to forehead looks smooth. The surgical changes to the nose that can be done as part of FFS include:

- reducing the bone from the bridge of the nose to make it flatter
- reducing the width of the nose to make it thinner
- shortening the nose by removing some of the cartilage at the tip of the nose
- narrowing the nostrils

Cheeks

Cheek augmentation can be done to emphasize the “cheekbones” (zygomatic arch), making the cheeks more prominent and also making the chin/jaw look smaller. Augmentation can be done using bone grafts, synthetic implants, or fat implants. Alternatively, the cheekbones can be cut and repositioned using a wedge of bone.
Lips

The surgical changes to the lips that can be done as part of FFS include:

- removing skin from between the nose and top lip to raise the upper lip
- angling the section of skin between the nose and upper lip back slightly
- using dermal skin graft to make the lips look fuller

Ears

Some MTFs have the position of their ears changed so they are flatter against the head (“ear pinning,” or otoplasty), or have the size of their earlobes reduced.

Tracheal shave

Rings of cartilage surround the windpipe in the throat/neck. In “males,” the thyroid cartilage tends to jut forward in a more pronounced point than in “females.” This point is sometimes called the “Adam’s apple” or laryngeal prominence. The thyroid cartilage can be surgically altered (“tracheal shave,” or chondrolaryngoplasty) to reduce the size and noticeable of the laryngeal prominence.

Timing of face/neck surgery

Most FFS techniques can be done at any point in transition (at the start, middle, or after you’ve had other surgeries). If you want both forehead and nose surgery, it is recommended that they be done together, as changes to the forehead can affect the shape of the nose.

Risks and possible complications of face/neck surgery

Every surgery involves possible risk of infection, bleeding, pain, and thick red scars. Antibiotics are usually given at the hospital to reduce the risk of infection. It is normal for there to be swelling and bruising after facial surgery.

All surgery that involves general anesthetic is a serious medical procedure. With general anesthetic there is a risk of a negative reaction to the anesthesia or, if you are lying flat for a long period of time, a risk of blood clots (which can be fatal). Surgeons, anesthetists, and surgical nurses are experienced in preventing problems and responding to any emergencies that happen during surgery. After you’re discharged from the hospital, to prevent blood clots move around as much as feels comfortable, and drink plenty of water.

Possible complications specific to face/neck surgery include:

- numbness, pain, or difficulty controlling the muscles of the area that was operated on: may be temporary (from swelling) or permanent (from nerve damage)
- problem with implants, wires, or screws: infection, reabsorption, or coming out of the body
- tracheal shave: possible damage to the voice
- difficulty adjusting to looking different after surgery (some people describe this as feeling like a stranger is looking back at them when they look in the mirror)
- disappointment with the appearance of results: eyebrows raised too high, nose looks unnatural, etc.
- thick red scars, or other problems relating to scarring
Post-operative care

The aftercare instructions are different for different types of facial surgery and depend on the specific technique used. Talk with your surgeon before surgery to make sure you understand what to expect and what you need to do after you’ve been discharged from the hospital, and to talk about pain management options.

Booking FFS with Estetica Thailandia

Step 1 – Getting a personalized cost estimation

Please write us an e-mail to info@transgendersurgerythailand.com. Please submit your full face photos: front and profile with no flash. Estetica Thailandia will send you FFS suggestion from our doctor with cost estimation within 3 business days.

Step 2 – Surgery booking request

You will need to prepare and submit the following documents to us:

- Passport copy: should be valid at least 6 months from your departure date.
- HIV test result
- Surgery booking form: Please fill in our booking form and provide us as much as possible information regarding drug allergy, your medical history, your expectation, your favorite food/activities etc.

Step 3 – Flight reservation

After having received a surgery date confirmation from us, you can start making your flight reservation. You may check flight availability prior starting step 1. Since this trip is your medical trip, please consider a direct flight or short transit time flight in order to make sure that you will have a comfortable flight on the way back after surgery.

Step 4 – Planning your itinerary

Estetica Thailandia will make a draft of your itinerary from the first day to the last day in Thailand. This program include pre-operative consultation, surgery day, post-operative check up, Bangkok visit program at your choice and so on. You can discuss with us about your special requirements, we are pleased to make this more than just a surgery trip 😊

Step 5 – Hotel reservation

You can make a hotel reservation by your own on internet or let us do this. We have special rate with hotels nearby the clinic.

Step 6 – Q&A then GO!

Please feel free to ask us anything regarding your trip, we are here to answer you all upcoming questions 😊