

IS COSMETIC SURGERY FOR YOU?

By Alison Leary Estep, Overlake Hospital Medical Center

For lasting and often dramatic improvements, more and more people are turning to cosmetic procedures to “turn back the clock” or make other long-wanted changes. It is an option for almost any physical characteristic that functions normally, but makes you unhappy. There may be a congenital defect that you’ve endured all your life or perhaps aging is taking its toll. Cosmetic medical procedures have the benefit of boosting self-confidence, but recovery time can be lengthy and most treatments are not covered by insurance. If you’ve been thinking of having something done, here are some helpful steps to follow.

1. “First look in the mirror and pinpoint in your mind the areas that bother you the most,” says Dr. Michael A. Leff of Overlake Plastic Surgeons. “Whether it is on your face or body, decide the problem areas you’d most like to change. You don’t need to know how, just clarify for yourself what you would like to see different.”

2. Go see a doctor who specializes in cosmetic procedures, such as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon. Other specialist alternatives include facial plastic surgery, otolaryngology, ophthalmology and dermatology. The right specialist for you depends on what you’d like done and your primary care provider can often help you navigate your specialist choices.

3. Once in the doctor’s office, Dr. Leff advises patients to talk candidly with their potential care provider by asking a series of questions. These include:

- What is your training? Is this a procedure you have been doing for some time? How many procedures have you performed?
- Are my expectations for change realistic?
- What is the recovery time like? What are the possible side affects?

HELPFUL WEB SITES

Overlake Hospital

www.overlakehospital.org

Offers a full range of cosmetic surgery options.

American Society of Plastic Surgeons

www.plasticsurgery.org

Advance quality care to plastic surgery patients by encouraging high standards of training, ethics, physician practice and research in plastic surgery.

- Women might ask: When can I wear makeup again?
- How long has this technology been around? What is its track record?
- How much will it cost? What are the payment options?

“Once you have met with a physician, gather your notes, weigh the costs versus benefits and ask yourself if it is something you still want to do,” advises Dr. Leff. “I also suggest that patients see at least two doctors to get alternative opinions. They might be quite different.”

A wide array of cosmetic procedures is available. Remember to talk with your doctor about your suitability for any of the following procedures.

Abdominoplasty

This is most commonly known as a tummy tuck. It is major surgery to remove extra skin and fat from the stomach area. The muscles of the abdominal wall are also tightened.

Breast Enlargement or Mammoplasty

This is a surgical procedure to change the size and shape of a woman’s breast. The possible material used for implants is a good topic to explore with your doctor.

Chemical Peel

A peel uses a chemical solution to remove the damaged outer layers of the skin, giving it a smoother, less-lined appearance.

Collagen Injections

Fillers, as well as other materials, are injected under the skin to plump up creased or sunken parts of the face, which temporarily creates a more youthful look.

Dermabrasion

This is a surgical scraping of the skin’s top layers to give skin a smoother, more youthful appearance.

Eyelid Surgery or Blepharoplasty

This surgery removes fat and excess skin from lower and upper eyelids.

Facelift or Rhytidectomy

A facelift removes excess fat and tightens and reshapes the skin of the face and neck. It can be combined with other cosmetic surgical procedures, including forehead lift, nose reshaping and eyelid surgery.

Liposuction

This procedure removes unwanted fat from certain parts of the body, including the neck, hips, thighs, buttocks and upper arms.

Rhinoplasty

Rhinoplasty changes the size of your nose, narrows nostrils and/or changes the angle between your nose and your upper lip.

All surgical and medical office procedures involve varying amounts of uncertainty and possible side effects that can include infection and reactions to anesthesia or other substances.

It is very important to choose a qualified provider and do your homework. Carefully follow your physician’s advice before and after a procedure. This can help you achieve the best possible outcome.