

COSMETIC SURGERY –
ARE YOU READY?

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INTRODUCTION

More people than ever are considering the benefits and the end results of plastic surgery. With the advancements in surgery and in the way the body can be shaped, it's hard not to resist the lure of the knife and what it can do for your body.

While 92% of all cosmetic surgery patients are women, men are becoming patients more often as well. Your appearance matters in the business world as well as in your personal life, so why not take steps to secure your looks for as long as you can?

But cosmetic surgery is not as simple as it sounds; neither is the decision whether or not to have it in the first place. In order to ensure you're making the best decision for yourself and for your body, you need to consider these medical procedures with a great deal of care.

1

WHY DO YOU WANT COSMETIC SURGERY?

If you're one of the many who are considering cosmetic surgery, you probably have several reasons for doing so.

TO CREATE A MORE YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE

Everyone is interested in turning back the hands of time. As the body ages, the skin begins to sag, collagen production begins to slow down, and the entire body begins to show that it is beginning to break down and to slow down.

While this is a fact of life and of the way our bodies were designed, these changes also help to make a person feel older than they actually are. And in some cases, those who are genetically predisposed to having a greater rate of aging can begin to look older than they actually are.

By having a cosmetic surgery, you can tighten the skin again, reshape it and begin to make the years less apparent. While it's true that you can't stop every sign of aging, you will be able to make yourself look refreshed and more toned than you did prior to the surgery in most cases.

A more youthful appearance can be created in any part of the body, which is why so many people tend to have multiple procedures over the course of their lifetimes – different body parts age at different rates, after all.

TO CORRECT A DEFORMITY

Some people are born with a problem with their appearance that needs to be corrected with cosmetic surgery. For example, women who have one breast that's larger than the other might want to have the breasts evened out with an augmentation of some sort.

These procedures can be simple or they can be complicated, depending on the severity of the deformity. Some examples include ears that are flared out from the head, an extra nipple or other body part, reconstruction after a tumor removal or mastectomy, etc.

Many of these deformities will occur early on in life and be corrected early in the patient's life, while others will require the body to mature completely before they can be corrected.

TO IMPROVE YOUR SELF ESTEEM

One of the most common reasons that patients give for cosmetic surgery is to feel better about themselves. While this isn't a medical reason, it can still certainly be a valid one. For example, if you were a woman who had a smaller chest, it might make you feel a little less feminine and that can cause your self esteem to be lessened.

While the surgery itself wouldn't necessary 'reshape' your self esteem, it would help you learn to love your body more. By taking control of your

image and of your appearance, you can correct something that you may have been ridiculed for in the past, for example.

TO CORRECT A MEDICAL PROBLEM

In many cases, cosmetic surgery actually isn't an option – it's a necessity. Nose jobs for deviated septums, for example, are necessary in order to allow the patient to breathe normally. While the surgery is technically a rhinoplasty, it is also helping the patient have a more normal life.

When people are severely burned or injured in accidents, plastic surgeons are called in to help repair the skin in a way that will minimize scarring and disfigurement. While the body may not be able to be restored to the exact appearance that the patient had before, the plastic surgery can keep the patient from feeling as though they are going to stand out too much from others who look 'normal.'

TO REWARD THEMSELVES

For some people, the use of cosmetic surgery is a sort of gift to themselves for a life of giving to others. Those who have given birth, for example, are now adding tummy tucks to their stay in the hospital as a sort of return to their pre-pregnancy bodies.

After losing a lot of weight, you might want to fix up a few body areas that didn't slim down as much as you want, as another example. In some women, certain body parts can't be changed by exercise and diet, so surgery is the only way to 'cure' these trouble spots.

Others 'give' plastic surgery to others for birthdays and other special occasions. While this is often condemned, for those who would like to change their appearance, this might be the perfect gift. And if it is something that is going to help the recipient's appearance in some way and they are aware of the risks, the gift of cosmetic surgery is a practical choice in some situations.

DECIDING WHY YOU WANT COSMETIC SURGERY

What you might not realize is that the reasons you want cosmetic surgery are quite important to the process as your surgeon will be asking you that question when you first set up an evaluation and consultation. They want to know whether or not you are serious about the process that will take place and whether you are actually a good candidate.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself:

- What are my expectations of the surgery?
- Am I willing to follow the doctor's orders?
- Why am I considering the surgery?
- Am I being influenced by anyone else to make this decision?
- Why is this surgery important to me?
- How do I believe my life will change after the surgery?

Take some time to sit with yourself to determine what your personal motivations are for the cosmetic surgery you choose. Again, this should be a decision you make entirely on your own. You will have to live with the results of the surgery, so only you can make the final call.

Someone who thinks that cosmetic surgery is something that will change their life or their luck in love, for example, are probably not the best candidates for the surgery in the first place. Surgery isn't going to change your life, nor is it the answer to all of your problems.

After all, surgery is only skin deep.

2

DO YOU NEED COSMETIC SURGERY?

The question that most people begin to hear once they tell others about their decision to have cosmetic surgery is whether or not they need it in the first place. And while there may not be a clear answer or a 'right' answer for this question, there are three individual answers that can occur. Where might you fit in?

YES, I DO NEED IT

In some cases, a patient will know for certain what they want for their body and exactly what they need to do to get it. And in other cases, the person might truly need the surgery in order to get by in their everyday lives.

Those who have a gastric bypass surgery, for example, often lose weight so quickly that their skin can not adapt to the ever-shrinking body. This weight loss is great for the patient's health, but severely damages their self esteem when they see large flaps of skin that remain behind.

The only way to remove these flaps of skin is through cosmetic surgery, so in these cases, it seems that 'yes' is the best answer.

In other cases, medical reasons like cancer, infections, illnesses, and deformities necessitate certain cosmetic procedures.

There are other people who might need to have cosmetic surgery because of a condition that is hindering their quality of life. For example, those who might have too large of breasts might need a reduction to help them lessen back pain or shoulder troubles.

NO, I DON'T NEED IT

Also known as elective cosmetic surgery procedures, those who actually don't need to have cosmetic surgery are generally a fairly larger group. This is why it's essential that plastic surgeons carefully screen the patients that they see for consultations.

When someone doesn't actually need the surgery, they may not take the risks and the after care instructions as seriously as they need to. This will result in lesser results than were expected.

Others that might not require cosmetic surgery may not see the drastic results that they envision in their mind. This can lead to general dissatisfaction in their appearance as the surgery didn't change all of their flaws.

Those who are younger may also fall into the category of 'no.' Since the human body changes and grows through the teenage and the young adult years, it might be best to wait for the growing to stop before assessing the need for cosmetic surgery.

Patients who want to radically change their appearance are generally not the best candidates for cosmetic surgery (seen Michael Jackson lately?). When

you want to have multiple procedures in order to create the 'perfect' body, you will never be satisfied, which may not make you the best person to receive plastic surgery.

MAYBE NOW, MAYBE LATER

Those who are on the fence about cosmetic surgery will constantly go back and forth about whether they actually need cosmetic surgery to improve their appearance. There may be very good reasons for them to have the surgery, but on the other hand, they realize that they might not be the best candidate at this point in their life right now.

For example, patients who aren't in great health or who have busy schedules might want to wait for a more appropriate time of their lives.

These patients might have procedures in mind that their body may not need yet too. Those who might want to have liposuction may want to try to diet and exercise first before they have the actual procedure. They may very well be able to lose the weight and shrink their bodies on their own, after all.

Or those who are looking to create a more youthful appearance might want to wait until they are a bit older and actually showing their age as much as they think they might be.

MAKING THE FINAL CALL

In the end, it's actually not up to the patient to decide whether or not they need plastic surgery in the first place – that decision is up to surgeon who will perform the surgery.

Doctors have become more careful about selecting the candidates that will be best for the surgery. They need to weight not only the anticipated results and satisfaction, but also the probability of the surgery progressing without complications.

By sitting down with a surgeon and discussing the ways they will be able to help the patient, the two will find out what the overall goals are and how that will work for both parties. The doctor can point out the potential results of the surgery by showing pictures of the past patients they have had and how their surgeries have turned out – but this is not a guarantee that you will get the same results.

Through a series of questions, the doctor will assess the need for the surgery. While they want to get your business, your health and your happiness are more important. At the same time, a doctor might refer you to someone else they know who might be able to specifically address your concerns.

In the end, if a patient gets a 'no' from a doctor, this is probably the best decision for the patient – at that time. Ask why the surgery isn't a good idea and whether it might be in the future. From the doctor's answer, you might be able to find out how to ready yourself for a future procedure.

Of course, you can always find a surgeon that will tell you 'yes,' but often these will be doctors who aren't as concerned about your health and your results. This is why it's so important to realize for yourself whether or not you actually need the surgery.

Deep down, you probably already know that you don't need the surgery, so why risk your health for something you can't change in the end?

3

ARE YOU A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR COSMETIC SURGERY?

Just as there are good and bad candidates for the government, there are better candidates for cosmetic surgery. Doctors are looking for candidates who are healthy and able to follow the directions they give them. But they're also looking for people with realistic expectations and those who understand the risks. Here are the questions the doctor will be asking you.

CAN YOU FOLLOW DIRECTIONS?

Before and after your surgery, you will be asked to do a number of things, depending on the surgeon you choose and the surgery you are having. It is crucial that you follow these directions to the letter as they can help to expedite your healing time as well as minimize the possibility of infection and of poor results.

If you're someone that can't handle following directions or you don't have the time to do things that your doctor asks you to do, you might not have to have the surgery in the first place. The doctor is counting on you being a partner in the procedure and they will need you to take care of yourself as they instruct.

ARE YOU HONEST?

Honesty doesn't seem like something that would make you a strong candidate for surgery, but if you're not being honest, you can not only put your health at risk, but you might also lessen the results you can expect.

For example, if you have any medications, supplements or illegal drugs in your system, the doctor will need to know this. Even herbal medications can affect the rate at which your blood clots – very important when you are having a surgery.

If you're not willing to be honest with your doctor during this process, you might be putting your life on the line. The doctor will need to know about your drug use, your activity levels, and your diet in detail. While you might be uncomfortable talking about these kinds of things, this is the most important part of the preparation process.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Here's the biggie for those who want to have cosmetic surgery. You need to have realistic expectations for your surgery. Chances are good that you will never be perfect and flawless, but the surgery will significantly improve your life and your appearance.

By having a reasonable set of expectations, you will not only be happy with your results, but you will be happy with your decision.

Keep in mind that:

- No surgery turns out the same for everyone

- No one looks perfect and cosmetic surgery won't make you perfect
- No surgery will change your life

By creating a realistic idea in your mind of the results you can expect, you will realize that the changes you've made are in a positive direction and that they not only accent the look you already have, but they will also help to retain the person you were before.

When you have unrealistic expectations, you're not only going to be disappointed with your results, but you might also have troubles following the post operative instructions that are so crucial to your health and to the results you want.

Realize that while plastic surgery can be done right, it may never be exactly what you pictured in your mind.

HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?

A body that's in shape and is healthy is one that will sail through surgery with minimal problems.

Ideally, cosmetic surgery candidates should:

- Be between 25 and 45 years old
- Be non-smokers
- Be clean of illegal drugs
- Be of an average weight
- Have no heart problems
- Have no circulation problems
- Be free of most allergies

When your body is in shape, it will be able to handle the stress of the surgery and it will be able to heal more quickly. For example, those with diabetes will have a harder time healing from surgery as their circulation is not as efficient.

Smoking causes body damage to the cells as well as to the lungs. When you're going to be under anesthesia, this can cause it to be more difficult to oxygenate your body during the surgery, upping the risk for complications. In addition, when the breathing tube is removed, patients who are also smokers tend to have an increased risk of infections and of clots in the lungs.

Ideally, you should either be a non-smoker or quit as quickly as you can before your surgery.

You should also be someone who is free of infection the day of and the days before the surgery takes place. If you find that you are sick or running a fever, let the doctor know and your surgery will most likely be postponed.

The patient should also be eating balanced meals in order to fuel their bodies in an appropriate manner that supports the immune system as well as the healing process.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISKS?

Many patients think that because most cosmetic surgeries aren't exactly necessary, they aren't dangerous. This is far from the truth. Whenever you cut into someone's body, you are exposing them to the possibility of infection, scarring, and even death.

Here are some of the other risks associated with plastic surgery:

- Swelling
- Bruising
- Blood clots in the legs or lungs
- Loss of blood
- Disfiguration
- Reactions to the anesthesia
- Extreme pain
- Edema
- Shock

Before you go into any surgery, you need to be aware of all of the potential problems that might happen. Now, chances are good that you won't have any troubles – and the healthier you are, the even further this risk is reduced – but you still need to be aware. By weight the risks with the benefits, you will be able to decide if the surgery is really for you.

When you receive the list of risks associated with the surgery, you should ask the doctor to clarify anything you don't understand and the likelihood of each potential complication.

4

HOW TO FIND A SURGEON

Your body should be protected at every stage of the cosmetic surgery process, but while we know that, it's not always clear just how we can protect ourselves when it comes to our doctor choice.

Choosing the cosmetic surgery surgeon is a difficult process, but it should be. When you want the best results and the minimal risks, you need to know that your body is in the best hands (literally and figuratively) possible.

Some resources for finding your starter list of potential candidates include:

- Friends and family
If anyone has already had plastic surgery, why not ask them who they like and what they've heard about doctors to stay away from?
- Your health insurance
Though most health insurances companies will not pay for cosmetic surgeries that are deemed unnecessary, those who are listed in your provider plan have been checked out and approved by your health care company.
- Your primary care doctor
Check with your everyday physician to see who they recommend for your surgery.

- Websites
More often than ever, surgeons are listed on websites of hospitals in your area, along with their CV and their credentials. This will help you begin to see who's in your area.
- Hospitals
You can also call around the local hospitals to see if there's any surgeon who's more popular than others.
- Nurses, especially operating room nurses
Since these are the nurses who see the surgeons every day, you might want to check with them to see who they recommend. Just call a hospital to talk with the nursing supervisor and then to an OR nurse.

Once you have a list of candidates, you need to condense this list into the best possible candidates. First of all, check their credentials with a background check and a call to the local medical boards. While this seems a little superfluous, many doctors do practice without a current license, so you need to double check to see that your doctor's certifications are current and ready to help you.

You will also want to find the resumes of the surgeons you are considering. Look to see where they have practiced and whether they have been at the current practice for a while. You want to see whether the surgeon is stable and steady in their work record as a spotty record might be a sign of past lawsuits or discipline issues.

Check to see if they are a member of the American Board of Plastic Surgery. You can find this information easily online or call the board directly to find out the information and what it takes to become a member.

Also, find out where they are able to practice. Often, surgeons will work out of their own surgical facility or be affiliated with a hospital – or both.

WHEN YOU'RE AT YOUR CONSULTATION

Once you've decided on a few doctors that sound reasonable, it's time to set up consultations. These visits are generally free of charge or have a minimal co-pay as directed by your health insurance.

At these appointments, ask to see pictures of past satisfied patients who have had the same procedures as you wish to have. This will give you a general idea of what kind of surgical style the surgeon has and what you will be able to expect.

In addition, you should ask about their rate of success, their rate of infection, and their current morbidity rates. While these might be tough questions to ask, you need to make sure that you're not going to someone who has troubles with keeping their patients healthy.

You will also want to ask about recovery times and what you can expect in terms of the surgery, the pain levels, and the rate of healing. This will help you understand their opinions based on examining you.

And they will examine you in this visit, in most cases. You should be honest about what you want fixed and how you see your body looking at the end of the procedures. This will help the doctor understand what you need from them and then they can decide whether or not they are the best person for the job.

If you can, try to see if you can contact previous patients to see how happy they are. Don't necessarily rely on the brochures and the advertisements

that you see for the surgeon's office. Try to talk to real people about their experiences with this surgeon.

Other things to look for in a surgeon include:

- **Friendly manner**
If you're comfortable with a doctor, you're more likely to have an open dialogue that helps you get what you want and helps to calm your fears.
- **Patience with your questions**
You want a doctor that is willing to answer your questions and make you feel at home.
- **Non-pushy attitude**
Some surgeons like to make you feel as though you need to have more work done. Don't work with a surgeon who makes you feel like you need to have additional and unnecessary procedures. Some might be necessary, which is why you want to go to several doctors to hear several opinions to see who you believe.
- **A compassionate staff**
Since you will be dealing with the office workers and nurses as well, you need to be certain they make you feel comfortable too.

You will also want to bring up the payment plan during this appointment, as well as an estimate of the work that you want done. By doing this, if your insurance will not chip in, you can begin to negotiate a financing plan, if they have one available.

In the end, trust your intuition when it comes to your doctor choice. If you don't feel comfortable or you just feel as though something is 'off,' try to find someone else. Chances are good that your hunch is right.

5

FACIAL PROCEDURES

The face is the first thing you see when you meet someone. Naturally, this part of the body gets more attention than any other when it comes to matters of plastic surgery. In order to educate yourself as to the various procedures you have, here are the top five procedures, what they entail, and what they can do for you.

EYE LIFT

Also known as blepharoplasty, an eye lift helps to smooth out the sagging skin that surrounds the eye – both above and below the actual eye itself. This will help to give the eyes a more refreshed and awake look, without much scarring or a painful recovery.

When the patient is under anesthesia, the eye lid is cut, right at the crease, to remove a small portion of the actual lid. The incision lines will be well hidden within the natural bone structure of the eye socket, so no one will be able to see a thing. After this skin is cut away, the edges of the remaining skin are sewn together to help lift the eye up, hence the name.

On the bottom part of the eye, there is a small incision made in the bags beneath the eyes and the procedure works in much the same way.

The actual incisions will be covered in tape at the end and while there will be bruising and redness at first, the healing time is generally quite quick.

FACE LIFT

If you want a more radical approach that lifts the entire face, a face lift is for you. By making small incisions around the hairline near the ears, the skin pulled more tightly around the face, causing fine lines and wrinkles to vanish, while also making the skin appear much firmer.

The surgeon might also make a larger incision just below the ears and then pull the skin off the skull in order to remove some of the excess skin that was once attached to the hairline. Then, the two edges of the skin are then sewn together to create a tighter face overall.

To enhance the look of a face lift, the surgeon might recommend implants in the cheeks or the chin to really create a more defined and youthful visage.

The scars are minimal and the incisions are minimal, so the healing time is short and often a matter of weeks.

CHIN AND CHEEK IMPLANTS

To help further define your face and make it more angular, you might want to choose chin and cheek implants. These are silicone pieces that are slid underneath the skin to give the appearance of bone structure where you might not have any right now.

These are found in a variety of sizes and shapes to help make the effect as natural as possible. The cheek implants are placed into a pocket of skin and

fat right between the cheek bone and the skin with a small incision in the cheek, while the chin implants are inserted through a small incision at the bottom of the chin to minimize scarring.

RHINOPLASTY

One of the most popular cosmetic procedures is the nose job, or rhinoplasty. In this procedure, you can have a bump on your nose corrected or you can correct a deviated septum that might be causing you troubles when you breathe.

For most, they want to smooth out any bumps or ridges on their nose, possibly from previous injuries or just from genetics.

The surgeon will make a small incision in the nostrils or between them to minimize scarring and recovery time. The skin will be lifted up slightly in order to gain access to the structure underneath. Into this incision, they will push instruments that slowly remove excess bone and cartilage until the proper shape is created.

If the septum is deviated, then the septum is pushed back into its proper place.

The incision is sewn up and the surgery is complete.

SKIN COSMETIC SURGERY

What many people don't realize is that cosmetic surgery to the face may not be very invasive, but it can be quite effective at turning back the hands of

time. There are generally three different levels of cosmetic surgery for the skin:

- Dermabrasion
- Microdermabrasion
- Chemical peels

Dermabrasion uses small particles to help buff away the dead and dull skin cells on the face and the rest of the body, if you like. This should only be done by a licensed and experienced professional as the larger particles can cause damage if not applied in the correct way. Microdermabrasion uses smaller particles and can often be done on your home with a home based kit.

Chemical peels can be a little trickier as they are often not tolerated well by those who have sensitive skin. By they work by using chemicals to buff off the outer layer of skin to reveal youthful and new skin.

But the most popular skin cosmetic surgery is inject-ables – Botox, Restylane, and collagen. Botox is a form of botulism that helps to soften the appearance of lines and wrinkles by paralyzing the muscles that hold them in place. This will work for a number of months before it needs to be touched up, less often in some patients. Make sure this is done by a qualified professional as though who are not trained can overdo the procedure and cause you to lose the ability to have facial expressions.

Restylane and collagen are actually fillers that help to fill in the sinking parts of your face or to fill in your lips to make them smoother and plumper. Again, these too don't last forever, but the effect is immediate and it can certainly improve your face in hours, not days.

While there is grace in aging, the more advanced facial techniques are showing that you can look good while the years pass.

6

BREAST AUGMENTATION AND TUMMY TUCKS

Two of the most common cosmetic surgeries today are breast augmentations and tummy tucks.

And while obviously breast augmentations are primarily for women, this surgery isn't reserved for them alone. Many more men are turning to pectoral augmentation to help them get a more defined look in their chest and abdomen region.

By placing silicone implants underneath the chest muscles, the male patient can begin to look as though they have larger pecs that are not only defined, but also hard to the touch. This is often something that's considered when working out hasn't improved the muscle tone and there is a family history of smaller pectoral definition. In those cases, surgery is the only option to change the man's chest area.

Since women are the main patients for breast augmentation and tummy tucks, you will learn the finer points of both of these procedures as well as the risks, the results, and the modifications that are possible.

BREAST AUGMENTATION

Changing the size of one's breasts is a very difficult and personal decision. Many times this decision comes after years of painful back pain or neck pain in the case of too large of breasts or from years of suffering low self esteem because of a flat chest.

In addition, those who might have had a single or double mastectomy may choose breast reconstruction to help alter the appearance of their chest and bring it back to a more normal appearance.

Other reasons for breast augmentation include:

- To create symmetry in the breasts
- To lift up sagging breasts

Most women are naturally born with one breast that's larger than the other, but in the case of those with significant changes, having a mastectomy will help to solve the problem for good.

Those who have had children or who have gotten older might opt for a breast lift that helps to pull the breast into a higher and more youthful position.

Just as in any surgical procedure, the patient will receive anesthesia for the procedure, at which point an incision will be made at one of three areas of the abdomen:

- Under the armpit
- Under the breast
- Along the bottom edge of the areola

The choice of the incision will be determined by the size of the implants that might be used or the extent of the breast reduction.

In a breast reduction, some of the fatty tissue is removed to help reduce the size of the breasts, while in an augmentation; the surgeon will insert an implant between the breast tissue and the chest muscle wall.

These implants may be made of silicone or of saline, depending on the feel and the choice of the patient. When the implant is in place, the incision is sewn up after a thorough check by the doctor for symmetry and shape. Sometimes, a larger or smaller implant will be used if the final look doesn't meet the goals of the surgeon.

Some surgeons like to place the implant within the pectoral muscles too as this will tend to be a firmer fit, but this is something the patient will want to discuss with their doctor.

Breast implants do need to be removed and replaced from time to time, as these aren't meant to last forever. Regular screenings to check the positioning will help keep the patient and the doctor pleased with the results.

The results are immediate, however, and once the swelling goes down, the breasts will be more defined than they were prior to the surgery.

TUMMY TUCKS

If a patient has tried everything to lose weight around their midsection, but just can't seem to get rid of a spare tire, a tummy tuck can be the cosmetic surgery of their dreams. By helping to remove excess fat that's accumulated and to tighten up the abdominal muscles, this surgery can help both men and women with a less than defined stomach area.

Before the surgery, however, many doctors will want the patient to try to lose as much weight as possible in order to see just how much work will be necessary. In some cases, the patient may not have done all that they can and they may very well be able to have a flat stomach without surgery.

However, women especially have troubles with their midsection after pregnancies as the baby can push against and loosen their abdominal wall entirely, causing a drooping abdomen no diet or exercise plan can fix.

The surgeon will make a long incision along the pubic line on the top of the thighs and the pubic area. There will also be an incision in the belly button. The surgeon then goes in and tightens up the muscles, removes excess fat and tissues and then closes up the area.

There may be significant swelling for a long time after the surgery has been completed. This is normal and it will subside. Since this is often an outpatient surgery, it's best to remember that while you may be able to go home the same day, you will need someone to help you around for a bit until the pain subsides.

Men can also have tummy tucks when they're genetically predisposed to fat accumulation around their stomach area. This will help to shrink their waistlines and help to create a more balanced overall look.

It's important to keep in mind that while the results of a tummy tuck can be astounding, they need to be maintained with regular exercise and a healthy diet. If the patient goes back to their old way of life and that way of life included excess calories and a sedentary lifestyle, the larger stomach can come back.

With both breast augmentations and tummy tucks, you can completely change the shape of your abdomen, but keeping it up will be up to you.

6

LIPOSUCTION

While many people would love to get rid of the extra fat cells on their body forever, not everyone is a prime candidate for liposuction. Though this surgery will do exactly that, most surgeons will want to know that the patient has done everything they can to get rid of the fat on their own.

You might be asked to go on a strict weight loss program first to see how far your weight can go within a certain amount of time. But the truth is that our bodies continue to make fat cells, and some people are simply genetically predisposed to more fat cells in certain areas.

In any case, you do need to be about 30% away from your ideal weight as you want to have skin that is elastic enough to tighten up after the excess fat cells are removed. If your skin is not elastic, you might have troubles with bumps and ripples.

No matter how much they diet and exercise, they might never reduce their body to the size and shape they like. And the only way to solve their problems is to suck those fat cells out of the body.

You can have liposuction done on a number of body parts and it's often used in conjunction with tummy tucks and other cosmetic procedures.

- Chest
- Cheeks

- Chin
- Neck
- Thighs
- Buttocks
- Knees
- Calves
- Inner thighs
- Ankles
- Hips
- Abdomen
- Upper arms - triceps area
- Back

When the fat is removed from the sections of the body, it can simply be thrown away or it might be used to fill in other areas of the body – fat injections are quite popular for the face to fill in lines and creases.

The body parts where the liposuction is completed will also be reshaped along the way. After all, your body does need some fat in order to stay warm and healthy. Thus, you shouldn't expect all of your fat cells to be removed.

The procedure begins with anesthesia, of course, to render the patient unconscious for the procedure, though it is often done as an outpatient procedure and you can go home the same day.

The surgeon will make a small incision near the area where the liposuction will occur, somewhere inconspicuous so that there is minimal scarring. Into that incision, they flood the area with a sterile liquid solution. This solution helps to reduce the trauma to the area as well as the bleeding that may occur.

Then a cannula is inserted into the areas in a rod-like device in order to break up the fat cells and tissue in order to be vacuumed out by a surgical vacuum. Often the breaking up of the fat is done with an ultrasound machine. The waves help to shake up the fat and to make it ready for easy extraction. The surgeon will stop at several points to see how the body part is changing before deciding to remove more or to remove less if the results look good.

While this procedure is pretty straightforward, there are a number of potential complications. People have died from this surgery, so you need to be aware of the side effects as well as the outcomes you might experience.

Complications can include:

- Extensive fluid retention
- Bruising
- Pain
- Asymmetry
- Lumps
- Rippling skin
- Loose skin
- Fat clots
- Scarring
- Bleeding
- Nerve damage
- Infection

Even though the surgeon might remove all of the excess fat that you wanted removed, this will not be a final solution to your weight issues – if you have any. You will need to maintain this fat loss by following a proper diet and exercise plan.

The body can produce new fat cells that can fill the area once more. And since you may already be predisposed to gaining weight in those areas, it might be even more difficult to remove the second time you try.

Following the doctor's after care plan is always a good idea, but it's even better when you want to maintain your slimmer new you.

After the surgery, you will need to wear compression garments to help alleviate swelling and pain. In some cases, you might need to have a drain put into the area to drain away the excess fluid.

The operation is generally outpatient, so you can go home the same day, though you will need someone to take you home and to help you around, depending on the location of the surgery.

Within a few weeks, the full results of your liposuction will be visible and ready to enjoy and to share.

A WORD OF WARNING

Because liposuction is just a popular cosmetic surgery, it's also becoming a surgery that's more likely to be advertised and performed by those who aren't as skilled at the surgery itself.

You want to only go to qualified surgeons for this practice and heading to anyone who might offer discounted rates or offer to remove all of your body fat is someone you should stay away from.

In addition, this process should only be slightly altering your body shape, not taking away every ounce of fat you have. To do so would cause problems for

your body as fat acts not only as an insulator, but also as a cushion for your internal organs.

Stick with a surgeon who doesn't make large promises of making you 'skinny,' no matter how tempting it might be. This surgery has gone very wrong for people who wanted a surgeon to simply take away as much as they could, resulting in asymmetry in the body and an unnatural look.

In addition, those who try to take away too much fat can harm the patient internally, resulting in excessive bleeding and post surgery complications that could have been avoided.

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PREPARING FOR SURGERY

While you might be excited for your cosmetic surgery, this is not the time to have a last hurrah before a liposuction procedure or to go out and buy clothes that are five sizes smaller.

Chances are good that your procedure is much more subtle and you have other ways you need to prepare for this special day. Along with your doctor's orders, here are some guides to preparing your body and your mind for the cosmetic surgery you have planned.

PHYSICAL PREPARATIONS

Your body is what is undergoing a massive surgery soon, so it's no wonder that you want to start by taking the best care of it possible. These steps will help the healing process be fast and the recovery time be short.

- Eat balanced meals

These meals will be providing your body with nutrients that will help to increase the body's ability to heal itself, plus it will keep your weight steady so that you're not adding more fat cells to the process of liposuction, for example.

- Exercise regularly

When you are more active, your immune system gets a workout too. This will help to keep your lungs strong for the anesthesia, while also strengthening your muscles to ensure that you are creating a tight and toned figure.

- Take a multivitamin

With your doctor's permission, start taking a multivitamin to make sure you are getting the vitamins and minerals your body needs. Just make sure that the supplement doesn't contain any herbs.

- Drink lots of water

The actual surgery is quite tough on your body and you might lose a small amount of blood in the process. To help your body make more efficiently, make sure to keep yourself hydrated in the days leading up to the surgery.

- Don't smoke

Smoking not only ages your skin and body, but it can also increase your odds of infection, while increasing your odds of a slow recovery time. Try to quit before your surgery or at least stop in the weeks leading up to the surgery.

- Don't drink
Much like smoking, drinking can accelerate the aging process, while also reducing the ability of your body to heal. Try avoiding it as much as you can.
- Get enough sleep
This will also help boost your body's healing powers the day before and in the weeks leading up to your surgery.

Some physicians might actually put you on a supplement regimen, so if this is the case, make sure to follow the instructions exactly.

MENTAL PREPARATIONS

While your body is center stage for the surgery itself, your mind is going to have to deal with the cosmetic changes before and after the surgeon begins making incisions.

What many people don't realize is that having realistic expectations is one of the most important things you can do. You need to make sure you are fully aware of three things:

1. Your body will never be perfect.
2. The results you have in your mind may not be what actually happens.
3. Your body will never be the same.

In recognizing the truth of these statements, you will not wake up and wonder, "What the heck did I just do?"

If you're not certain what to expect, have your surgeon describe the reasonable results to you as well as show you pictures of what you might look like at the end of the recovery.

But in addition to having realistic expectations, you also need to focus on the fact that your face or your body will not be the same. For some people, this is a significant adjustment.

For example, if you have your family's nose and you go in for a nose job to have it fixed, you will begin to look different from everyone else in your family. Some people don't like the idea of this and they might be upset at the end of the surgery once they realize this.

To help you through this transition, you might want to talk with a therapist before and after the surgery to work on any problems as they come up.

Mentally, you also need to prepare yourself for the rigors of recovery. You aren't going to wake up and be instantly beautiful and thinner, in many cases. Recovery can be a slow and arduous process in which you don't see results for weeks, even months.

By reminding yourself again and again of how far you've come and how you will look in the end, you can make sure you get through that recovery time with patience.

WORKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR AND NURSES

The most important person in the preparation process is the medical team that will be following you into the operation room. It might be helpful for you to meet them ahead of time and to have one final appointment to go over

any questions you might have or any concerns you may have thought of since you scheduled the surgery.

You will also get preoperative instructions that probably consist of:

- Do not eat after midnight the day before the surgery.
- Do not drink after midnight the day before the surgery.
- Ask about any medications that you might be taking and how to schedule them into your surgery day.
- Remove any nail polish or toe nail polish prior to the surgery – This allows the team to check your pulse oxidation and your overall oxygenation.
- Clean the area thoroughly the night before and in the shower the morning before the surgery with Hibiclens or something similar.

You will need to make sure you complete any and all tasks ahead of time or your surgery may be postponed until you can follow directions.

SOME WORDS OF ADVICE

If you can, try to get the first operating time of the day as it's less likely to get pushed back and the surgeon is often fresher and more alert first thing. Also, try to have your surgery during the week as that's when the experienced physicians are normally working. Weekends tend to be residents and interns.

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AFTER YOUR SURGERY

Once you've made it through your cosmetic surgery, the real changes begin. With your new parts in place and the incisions sewn up, you need to focus now on getting your body to heal properly and to heal quickly. After all, you want others to see just how great you look now.

The good news is that most cosmetic surgery procedures are using smaller incisions, which means less healing time. Often, you can go home the same day as your procedure and begin the recuperation process there.

Others might need another day in the hospital before they are ready to be discharged, so to help both potential patients, here are some things to keep in mind.

GOING HOME

When you're having simple facial procedures done, you might not even need to stay for an hour after your surgery is completed. You can simply walk out and begin to face the world with your new look. Things like skin resurfacing and Botox are examples of these kinds of procedures.

Other procedures might require that you stick around for a few hours to monitor your pain levels and your heart, but then you will be able to go

home. The medical staff just wants to make sure you aren't having any complications that require their attention.

It can not be stated enough that any postoperative instructions that your surgeon and nursing staff give you might be followed exactly. You might need to change bandages at certain periods of time or you might need to take antibiotics to prevent infection.

If you do not follow the protocol for your release, you might not only end up with serious complications, but your surgery's results may also be compromised.

If your surgeon has recommended that you take time off of work, it's a good idea to ask for that time off well ahead of your surgery. Should the recovery process be faster, you can always go back early.

Here are some tips for when you go home from a surgery:

- Have someone with you for the first 24 hours to assess your pain and to watch out for any problems. You might have trouble getting up and around for a bit, so this person can help keep you company as well as make sure you're okay.
- Have a place ready for you to sit down and to rest, surgery can take a lot out of you. Whether it's your bedroom or the couch in the living room, have plenty of blankets, liquids and anything else that might help you feel more comfortable.
- Gather anything you might need before you go home – prescriptions, braces, etc. This is where your friend or spouse will come in handy when they drive you home. They can help you gather everything that you need, as prescribed by the doctor.

- Eat light foods at first – Since anesthesia can be upsetting to some stomachs, you may want to avoid larger meals for a day or two until you feel a bit more like normal. Make sure to drink plenty of water to keep your body's digestion moving too.
- Take any pain pills on the schedule given to you – Even if you're not in pain, keeping the pain pills in your system will help if the pain comes back again or if it begins. If your stomach feels upset when you take them, try taking them with a little food or milk (unless otherwise told by your doctor).

Realize that you might not feel very well for a day or two, but this is normal. If you see signs like these, however, you should call your doctor or their office immediately:

- If you have a fever of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- If you can not urinate
- If you have extreme pain
- If the incisions look infected – pus, smells, etc.
- If you have bleeding

Do not leave the surgery center until you have the phone numbers of your nurse, your doctor, and anyone else who might be able to help you if you have any questions or concerns.

HIGH END RECOVERY CENTERS

For some people, they need to stay in the surgical center or a day or two to recover. They might not have someone to stay with them at home, so staying at the recovery center is a better option to make sure they are well enough to go back home on their own.

Many more cosmetic surgery facilities are including these high end recovery centers as a part of their standards of care. With rooms that seem more like hotel rooms than like hospital beds, you will still get around the clock care, but in a peaceful setting.

Some people also appreciate the care at these recovery centers as they greatly reduce the risk of infection from outside sources, while also allowing a bit of privacy to those who don't want everyone to know that they had a cosmetic procedure.

You can also find some recovery centers which offer additional services to help hasten your recovery. With services like specific pain pill combinations as well as ointments and creams to help minimize the scarring at your incision sites, you will not only get personalized attention, but also the care that your body deserves.

LONG TERM OUTLOOK FOR YOUR SURGERY

For most patients, cosmetic surgery offers them a way to change their bodies in a safe manner. While there may be some initial pain, this will subside for most patients within a matter of days and normal activities can resume within a few weeks.

If you have prepared your body for the surgery and your surgeon is good, you will see significant changes to your body within a couple of days to a

couple of months. Often, many of the changes last a lifetime, while others might need adjusting in a few years.

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COMMON QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE AND THEIR ANSWERS

Cosmetic surgery can bring up hundreds of questions for those considering it – and that’s a good thing. But for every question you have, you should also have an answer on hand to help you assuage your fears. It’s only with knowledge that you can make the best decisions for your body.

WILL MY SURGERY HURT?

This is the most common question that plastic surgeons are asked when a patient comes into their office. And it’s a good one. But the answer varies from person to person.

Some people have naturally high tolerances to pain, so the pain after surgery may not seem all that bad to them. But for others, it might be a bit tougher.

To help minimize your pain, ask your surgeon about the size of incisions they will be making into your body. Typically, the smaller the incision, the less pain you’ll have. In addition, ask your surgeon about the pain management system they will use once you’re out of surgery. You will typically get pain killers orally and then be given a prescription to fill when you get home. Make sure to take these pills as directed to prevent pain – it’s easier to prevent pain than to handle it once it’s already overwhelming.

WHEN WILL THE BRUISING AND SWELLING GO DOWN?

For most people, the biggest issue they have after surgery is postoperative swelling and bruising. Your body has gone through a traumatic experience, so this is normal. To correct this problem, you want to make sure you are wearing any supportive garments you may have been instructed to wear, as well as use ice and anti-inflammatory medications to help with the swelling. Everyone heals from bruises at different rates, so you may just need to be patient in that part of your recovery.

WHAT IF I'M ALLERGIC TO LATEX?

Those who are allergic to latex don't have to worry about having a reaction. Most cosmetic surgery centers will have a latex free operating room where you will be comfortable and safe from reactions.

HOW MANY PROCEDURES CAN I HAVE AT ONCE?

The answer to this question is a bit tricky because it depends on the procedures you want to have and how complicated they will be. In many cases, surgeries are recommended at the same time as this limits the exposure to anesthesia as well as the possibility of infection. It's always better, after all, to have only one incision instead of several.

Talk with your doctor about the procedures you wish to have done and they can arrange a schedule that is healthy for your body and for the results you want to see at the end.

HOW LONG WILL MY RESULTS LAST?

The results of your surgery can last for years in some cases, for months in other cases. Again, it all depends on the type of surgery you have as well as the extent of the surgery you've had. Inject-ables, for example, only last a few months as your body reabsorbs the fillers and disperses them throughout the body. Breast implants will last for years, but will eventually need to be replaced or reinserted as the body changes.

Other results will depend on your ability to maintain a healthy weight as the elasticity of the skin can certainly cause troubles for reshaping procedures. If you stretch the skin too much, the results can look unnatural.

HOW LONG UNTIL I CAN EXERCISE?

For most people, the thought of exercise isn't on their minds right away, especially after surgery. But when you've had a fairly minor procedure and you feel good enough to walk around, you might want to know if you can workout as you heal; only making yourself look better. The generally rule of thumb is that you shouldn't exercise if you've had surgery on your nose or below your chin until you've had your first follow up appointment. At this appointment, the doctor will be able to look over the results and tell you whether or not things are healing properly.

In many cases, it will be about four to six weeks, sometimes only two, before you can handle the rigors of exercise again. Of course, if you can stay

active, that's great – there's no need to sit around if you feel fine. Just stay away from high impact exercises until your doctor gives their approval.

WILL I LOOK NATURAL?

If you've chosen a high quality surgeon, chances are good that your surgery's results will look natural, though an improved natural version of yourself will emerge. Much of whether you look natural will also depend on what you tell the surgeon in your consultations and visits. If a woman asks for extremely large breast implants, for example, they aren't going to look natural if their body isn't in proportion to them. You need to be reasonable about the structure of your body as well as reasonable about what will look good for you and your age. Trying to erase every wrinkle, for example, is going to look a little out of place. In addition, injections like Botox can be overdone to the point where you don't have any facial expressions at all.

WHAT IF I DON'T LIKE MY RESULTS?

If you're genuinely upset with your results, talk with your surgeon. They might be able to help you with additional procedures that might get your body to the right shape or structure you want. In most cases, however, not liking your results might be a matter of too high of expectations. You're not going to look perfect right from the start, or possibly ever. But after everything has healed, you will begin to see improvements in your body – and that should leave you satisfied, at least.

If there are severe problems with your surgery results – loose skin, dimpling, infection, etc. – talk to your surgeon immediately to see if there's anything that can be done.

