

A close-up portrait of a woman with light brown hair and blue eyes, resting her chin on her hands. A red apple is balanced on her head, with a wooden arrow passing through it horizontally. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

# is this DR. *Right?*

Find your  
answer  
in 3 steps

by

Karen  
Donley-Hayes

contributing  
writer

Talk to people you trust and ask whom they recommend — and then look at before and after pictures of your potential physician's patients and the procedure you're considering.

**Y**ou might not be in charge of the auto industry, but where your own personal makeover is concerned, you have control over your own Big Three — three critical criterion for success: The right procedure, the right surgeon and the right “fit.”

### 1. THE RIGHT PROCEDURE

It might sound like a no-brainer, but deciding what you want to change is the first part of your Big Three — because it will drive the next two parts.

ITK advisor Dr. Joseph Niamtu explains that determining specifically what you want is imperative because that drives your choice of surgeon. The best surgeons are usually “super specialists” and concentrate on specific cosmetic procedures — faces, breasts, liposuction — Dr. Niamtu points out. “A surgeon that does primarily reconstructive procedures and ‘dabbles’ in cosmetics may not be the best choice, regardless of specialty or board certification.”

You can recruit the input of your potential surgeon in selecting your best procedure(s), but proceed with eyes wide open. The trick can be in judging if a physician is recommending procedures based on your needs, or recommending procedures based on his or her own preferences/specializations as a surgeon.

Dr. Michael Kluska, another ITK advisor, advises getting down to brass tacks. “Ask the prospective surgeon, ‘If this was your wife or daughter, what procedure



The best surgeons are usually “super specialists” and concentrate on specific cosmetic procedures — faces, breasts, liposuction.”

would you do on her if she had the same complaint’ that you want to have treated?”

Our third editorial advisor, Dr. Joel Schlessinger, says when you're seeking advice about procedures, expect to see — and receive advice from — the physician him or herself. Often, he says, “a lower level nurse or nonmedical person is in charge of booking and doing consults. They are incentivized and they waste no time in trying to up the bill,” and may make procedure recommendations based on that, not on what is best or most appropriate for you. Be sure that the procedure you're considering is what you want, not what a physician or practice wants you to have.

### 2. THE RIGHT SURGEON

Once you decide on what you want to have done, you need to find the best physician to perform that procedure. But how?

“Word of mouth and pictures say the most about a doctor,” Dr. Schlessinger says. Talk to people you trust and ask whom they recommend — and then look at before and after pictures of your potential physician's patients and the procedure you're considering.

Dr. Niamtu concurs. “Most busy, competent surgeons have a significant volume of cases that are testaments to their work. Generally a busy surgeon with good outcomes will be popular by word of mouth.” And, he too points out that, a picture is worth a thousand words. “If a facelift surgeon can't show you 50 before and after facelift pictures, something is not right.”

Dr. Kluska says you should also look at the photographic technique. “Look at the quality of the photos. Are the before and after photos from the same point of view

and angle?”

All photos should be taken with identical lighting, angles and posing of patients — “trick photography” can make results look more impressive than they are, so look for “transparency” and consistency in before and after photos.

And don't necessarily settle for the first surgeon you visit, Dr. Kluska says. “Interview several doctors. After all, you will eventually be spending a lot of time with him. This is like dating. You wouldn't date someone you don't like. Make sure you like your surgeon as well.” Also, ask practical questions. “Ask how many years he has been in practice. Ask how many of these procedures he does,” Dr. Kluska says. “Research the surgeon on the Web, through the Better Business Bureau, etc.”

### 3. THE RIGHT “FIT”

You know what you want to have done, and you think you've found a great surgeon. Enter the third element of the Big Three — is it a good fit? What's your gut tell you?

“It is important to know who you are going to, see their work when you go, and have a good feeling they are the one who will be doing your procedure,” Dr. Schlessinger says.

“We all know of excellent surgeons that have personalities like sour milk,” Dr. Niamtu adds, but even if a physician is a technical genius, “if you can't speak to your surgeon, you may have the wrong surgeon.”

A busy practice is a sign of a good practice, but you should not feel like a component on an assembly line. “Being able to reach your surgeon easily is paramount,” Dr. Niamtu says. “When I give my cell phone number to patients they are usually blown away, as few surgeons exhibit that level of sincerity.”

So, do your homework — and make the Big Three work for you. It will put you solidly in the driver's seat. ❗

### Should I expect to pay for cosmetic consultations?

If you want an honest evaluation and more knowledge about the cosmetic procedure you're considering, then yes! Think of it this way: The consult is an investment. You're paying for a service. (And most surgeons will apply the consultation cost to the cost of the procedure.) With a “free” consultation, you could face more a “selling” approach than an educational one.