

Caregivers in Cosmetic Surgery



The decision to have cosmetic surgery is a big one and involves much planning on the part of the surgeon's office and patient life. It is not a decision to rush into and experience has shown that patients that rush into surgery without the proper planning and details have more problems than patients that think out and prepare for the process.

It is somewhat different for the experienced surgeon as we do numerous surgeries every day. Although Dr. Niamtu has performed over 20,000 facial surgery procedures, each patient presents a unique recovery process due to multiple variables.

A younger patient, with numerous local family members and a supportive spouse may have a great recovery experience. She has plenty of help for transportation, post op care, errands, food preparation and spousal support. All she has to do is heal.

A different patient may be older, not have a group of friends to assist, no one to help her at home with chores while she is recovering. She may also have a family member who is not supportive as they may have been against her decision to have surgery and now have to care of her. "I told you that you should not have done this" are not words any patient wants to hear when they are recovering.

So, what is a Caregiver?

The word caregiver should not be used loosely when referring to the recovering cosmetic surgery patient. A caregiver can be a spouse, a family member, a friend, or a professional caregiver or nurse. A caregiver "gives care". As simple as that sounds, it is a problem for many patients.

Cosmetic surgery patients can be impetuous and impulsive. They make their mind up to have surgery and jump into it without much planning forethought. When asked about a caregiver, these patients may say "oh, I am fine my daughter will take care of me or my husband will take care of me." The problem is that her son is 18 and not very dependable; he knows very little about taking care of a surgical patient and won't be able to take her to the bathroom or perform other personal recovery functions. The husband may be an older man or have arthritis and may have physical difficulty getting

the post anesthesia patient into the car at the office and then get the patient out of the car and up two flights of stairs at home. The bottom line here is that “all caregivers are not created equal”.

Why Do We Need a Caregiver?

The level of the caregiver depends upon the cosmetic procedure performed. For instance, a patient that came to the office only for upper eyelid surgery may not require any assistance. On the other hand, a patient that just had a facelift, upper and lower eyelid surgery, full face laser and cheek implants will have a lot more discomfort, swelling; require more wound care and ambulatory assistance. A young healthy person may do well without help where an older patient can't do it.

When a patient is healing, depending upon the procedure, some are very swollen, some have blurry vision, some may have nausea or vomiting, some may require various level of wound care and some may simply need an understanding and compassionate person for emotional support.

The best way to think of it is “who would you leave with your children or grandchildren to baby sit?” It certainly would not be just anybody; you want an honest, competent, engaging and physically able person to guard your precious family. The same goes for a caregiver. You have to have someone smart enough make decisions and dispense medications on the proper schedule. You have to have someone strong enough to assist with lifting, walking, and trips to the bathroom. You need someone mature enough to understand the physical and emotional needs of a recovering patient and the ability to fully support them.

How Long Do I need a Caregiver?

That is a variable question and depends upon your age, health and how much surgery you had. The short answer is usually 24-28 hours. Some patients only need a caregiver for the first several hours and then do fine, others need longer support. If the patient has eye surgery or is on pain medicine, they cannot drive to the office. You need a caregiver until you can perform normal daily functions unassisted.

Who is the Best Caregiver?

Again, most responsible adults can provide basic post-surgical support. Our office can provide nurses or non-nurse professional caregivers to assist patients from a matter of hours or days.

Recovering patients should not be in direct contact with sick family members or any infections. Also direct contact with pets can provide a source of infection. You definitely don't want to sleep with your dog while recovering from your surgery.

Who is an Inappropriate Caregiver?

Back to the baby sitter analogy, don't trust your care to someone you would not trust to care for your children or grandchildren.

NEVER lie to your doctor and say that you have a caregiver when in reality you do not. This has happened and seriously complicates the entire process.

What do We Suggest?

For smaller procedures, your spouse can probably suffice. If you are having a facelift with other simultaneous procedures, we recommend a private duty nurse or non-nurse professional caregiver for the first night.

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