

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF before having COSMETIC PROCEDURE

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People turn to cosmetic surgery because they want to look better, feel better and improve their self-confidence. Cosmetic surgery is generally a positive experience that changes lives, but it can become a nightmare if the patient chooses the wrong surgeon or the surgeon chooses the wrong patient—it is truly a mutual relationship. If you are considering cosmetic surgery, first ask yourself the following five questions:

1. Why do I want to have the procedure?

Good reasons to have cosmetic surgery are to look and feel better and boost self-esteem and confidence. Patients who think cosmetic surgery will change their entire life are likely to be disappointed. Having cosmetic surgery to save a failing relationship or vie for a job promotion are not reasonable motivations. And patients who have cosmetic surgery just to get attention will likely remain insecure despite their rejuvenation. The best answer I like to hear when I ask my patients why they want cosmetic surgery is, "I just want to look as good as I feel and look as good as I can for my age." Whereas a 60-year-old woman who brings a picture of Angela Jolie to her consult sets off red flags.

2. Is this the right time in my life to have cosmetic surgery?

Depending on the procedure or procedures, cosmetic surgery can be an intense experience—from choosing the right surgeon, to deciding on the right correct procedures, to the recovery process. Recovery requires time, so expect to take things slowly after your procedure. You may only do this once in your life, so pick a time when you can focus on healing. If other serious issues such as grief, marital problems or parenting challenges have made life tumultuous, now is not the best time to commit to cosmetic surgery.


3. Can I afford the procedure?

Cosmetic surgery can be expensive, especially if you want multiple procedures. Like any other elective purchase, you should not place unrealistic financial burden on yourself just to look better. Impulsiveness has no place in making medical decisions. Postponing surgery, obtaining in-office financing or limiting the number of procedures may be solutions. Remember, it takes most of us a half a century get our wrinkles, you don't have to correct them all overnight.

4. What is my support system at home?

Recovery from any type of surgery can be intense and, depending upon the procedure, patients may need physical and emotional assistance. There is nothing more helpful than a compassionate, supportive spouse, but this is not the case in some households. I have seen husbands or wives disapprove of their spouse's decision to have cosmetic surgery. Sometimes it's jealousy, and sometimes it's the expense. Support at home cannot be underestimated. When you are in bed, bruised and bandaged, the last thing you want to hear is "I told you so."

5. Have I chosen the right surgeon?

It's important to choose a surgeon who is board certified in his specialty and one who routinely performs the specific procedure(s) you are considering. An experienced surgeon should be able to show a prospective patient many pictures of his or her work and have patient references readily available. Choosing an accredited office surgery center and discussing who will be performing the anesthesia are also important. It is a myth that only doctors of certain specialties are qualified to perform cosmetic surgery. It is the skill of the surgeon's hands that makes the difference, not what specialty he or she represents. Finally, you must be able to communicate openly and effectively with your surgeon. Trust your instincts. If you don't like your surgeon's personality or demeanor, don't hesitate to interview another surgeon. 

Not Your Mother's Facelift

A generation ago, cosmetic facial surgery was a well-kept secret and only obtainable by the wealthy. Patients were usually hospitalized for several days and took months to heal. Today, these surgeries are much less expensive and less complicated. For example, most facelift procedures can be performed in an accredited office surgery center with IV sedation, allowing the patient to return home the same day. Consequently, people are having procedures at a much younger age. In fact, the average age for a facelift has dropped from the sixth decade of life to the fourth. People tend to seek smaller, less invasive procedures such as BOTOX® and line fillers in their late 30s and early 40s.

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