

Plastic Surgery

The allure of looking young and beautiful at any age has made plastic surgery an increasing trend. There were 325,000 so-called "mommy makeovers" -- often including procedures such as a breast lift, tummy tuck, and liposuction -- performed on women ages 20 to 39 during 2006, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Top 5 Steps to Take Before Plastic Surgery

1. Tell your doctor everything. Keeping information hidden about your medical history or medications (even over-the-counter pills) could be the difference between a successful surgery and one with complications. Giving a plastic surgeon access to your own primary care physician is also a good idea.
2. Do preoperative testing. A good plastic surgeon will request blood work and possibly a cardio exam. Avoiding these tests could be putting yourself at higher risk.
3. Manage your expectations. Patients who are realistic about what surgery will accomplish are happier with the results.
4. Find a board-certified plastic surgeon. Board-certified doctors have extensive training in general surgery as well as in plastic surgery, and understand the physiological changes a body goes through during a procedure and can foresee potential complications.
5. Talk to your primary care physician. "Ask if you're at higher risk of complications than the general population," advises Dr. Wiener, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Chicago, whom Consumer Reports lists as a "Top Surgeon." It's important for your doctor to weigh in about this.

Americans spent \$12 billion on cosmetic surgery operations in 2007. Despite the potentially life-threatening side effects, breast implants were the most popular nip/tuck for women, followed by liposuction and nose jobs.

What Moms Need to Know about Plastic Surgery

Medical journals have reported death rates from liposuction at one in 5,000 to one in 50,000 procedures -- the reports vary greatly, but one thing remains constant: Surgery is not like going to get your teeth whitened or your hair colored. It's something that should be carefully considered and researched.

Plastic surgeon Dr. Brent Moelleken says about cosmetic procedures: "Generally it is very safe, especially when performed by board-certified plastic surgeons who follow proper safety procedures." He adds, "However, it is still surgery, and complications can happen in even the most carefully screened patients."

Dr. Weiner recommends that patients do not combine too many surgeries at once. "The longer you're under anesthesia," he explains, "the higher the risk for complications like infection or pulmonary embolism." Dr. Wiener says he keeps his surgeries under six hours to avoid potential complications.

Those thinking about going under the knife should also consider the psychological ramifications of plastic surgery. Some people seem to get "addicted" to having cosmetic procedures or form unrealistic expectations of looking like their favorite celebrity.

Once a woman has plastic surgery and is happy with the result, she may believe other procedures could be worthwhile. Victoria Pitts-Taylor, associate professor of sociology at Queens College and the author of *Surgery Junkies: Wellness and Pathology in Cosmetic Culture*, says it is important to remember how aggressively cosmetic surgeons market their products. It may be easier for patients to get "hooked" when procedures such as tummy tucks and breast lifts are packaged together.

Although Pitts-Taylor had rhinoplasty and was happy with the aesthetic results, she believes plastic surgery is under-regulated and thus is more dangerous than it should be.

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