

Plastic Surgery

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the vainest one of all?

It is said that all humans desire to be beautiful – we wear fancy clothes, smear creams and lotions on our skins, eat special foods and hope that our efforts will make us beautiful. Some people are even brave enough to go under the surgeon's knife to be "sculpted" into "beauties".

Read on to find out more about the extreme methods that people are willing to put themselves through in order to look good!



History of Plastic Surgery

Astonishingly, the origins of plastic surgery can be traced back to 3000 B.C., Egypt, where Egyptian doctors had used surgical methods to treat facial wounds!

No pain, no beauty?

There are so many ways to enhance one's looks nowadays but one of the most controversial methods is to undergo a medical procedure known as plastic surgery. Plastic surgery is a branch of surgery that involves reshaping and moulding live tissue to reconstruct facial and body parts.

Reconstructive and cosmetic surgery

Plastic surgery started out as a life-saving medical procedure known as reconstructive surgery; it helped war victims to lead normal lives after suffering traumatic injuries. Ironically, the advances in reconstructive surgery owe a lot to wars and destructive weapons. Doctors who worked at the battlefield often had to deal with devastating injuries, such as mutilated facial features and horrific burns. As a result, they were able to sharpen their surgical skills and invent new techniques to treat uncommon injuries.

Apart from giving accident victims or those who suffer from birth defects a "normal" appearance, plastic surgery can also help to "enhance" a healthy person's looks and make them more beautiful. This is known as cosmetic surgery and it is currently the most common type of plastic surgery in the world!

There are various opinions about cosmetic surgery – some regard it as a shallow means to boost one's ego while others see it as a means to enhance one's quality of life. The results of cosmetic surgery vary too: from enviable looks that resemble those of beautiful celebrities to mangled faces that result in lawsuits. But before you form your own opinion about this controversial science, let's look at some commonly performed operations in cosmetic surgery and the risks involved.

Double eyelids, double trouble?

The most popular cosmetic surgery performed in Asia is a surgical procedure known as **blepharoplasty**. Also known as double eyelid surgery, blepharoplasty creates a crease above the eyelid and this gives people with single eyelids the appearance of wider eyes. The



surgeon first makes an incision or small cut, in the upper eyelid and uses lasers to remove excess fat, muscle and skin. Afterwards, the incision is closed up with **sutures**, leaving the patient with a double eyelid crease. It is considered a relatively minor surgical procedure and the patient can usually return home the same day.

However, complications could still arise and patients could end up blind or with permanent, obvious scars.

Lip augmentation

Another relatively minor cosmetic surgery procedure is lip augmentation. This involves injecting **collagen** or even the patient's own fat, to give the lips a plump appearance. This procedure can be done quickly under **anaesthesia** and the patient can return home the same day. Despite the fact that it is a relatively low risk procedure, infections can still occur and the lips may have a lumpy, uneven appearance.



Nosing around

Nose augmentation is a popular cosmetic surgery procedure that can radically change one's appearance. Also known as **rhinoplasty**, it involves changing the shape and size of one's nose by removing bits of nose cartilage and bone. The bone may also be broken deliberately by the surgeon, so that the nose can be moulded to form the desired shape. This is a delicate procedure that may yield uneven results, depending on the skill of the surgeon and how well the patient's nose withstands the surgery. It is not uncommon for the patient to return to the doctor for follow-up "corrective" procedures to attain the desired shape.



Chemical peels

Imagine smearing acid onto your face, then peeling your skin off like a banana peel? Well it's hard to believe but people actually pay doctors to do that for them! A chemical peel is a procedure that corrects imperfections like blemishes, fine lines and wrinkles on the skin. It basically mimics a severe sunburn. During a chemical peel, the upper layers of the skin are removed, revealing a new layer underneath. Needless to say this is skin damage at its worst, but the patient does achieve a less wrinkled and less blemished complexion in a week or two.

A perfect body

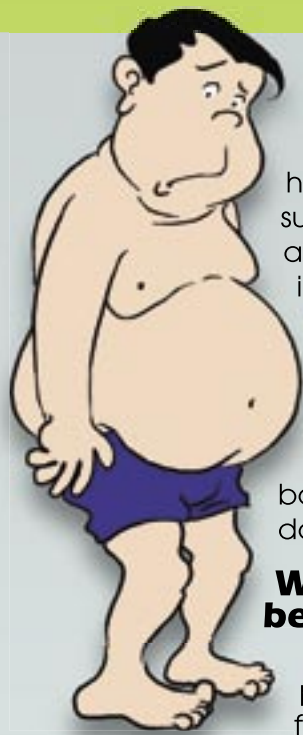
With cosmetic surgery, a "perfect" body is just as attainable as a "perfect" face. Millions have undergone plastic surgery to attain a slim, toned and sculpted body. One of the most popular procedures is **liposuction**. This surgical procedure literally sucks out unwanted fat from body areas with excess fat. The surgeon first creates a small incision in the area, and then inserts a suction tube that "vacuums" the fat away. The danger is that blood and body fluids may be "vacuumed" out as well. If blood loss is excessive, the patient may even need a **blood transfusion**. This operation is done under anaesthesia and the wound is bandaged up after the procedure. Hospitalisation is usually required.

Liposuction carries a lot of risks and could result in excessive blood loss, blood clots, infections, nerve and tissue damage, lumpy flesh and obvious scarring. Needless to say, this gruesome procedure is not for the fainthearted!

Botox

Are you afraid of injections? Imagine injecting bacteria into your facial muscles to "paralyse" them so that they don't wrinkle! How bizarre is that?! Well, Botox injections is a very popular cosmetic surgery procedure. Botox is actually a diluted form of the deadly bacteria that causes botulism, a muscle-paralysing disease. When administered in controlled doses, it can temporarily "erase" wrinkles. However, the patient may lose the ability to make certain facial expressions!





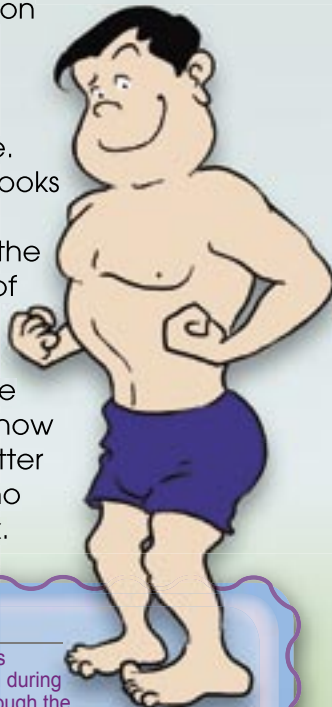
Tuck in that tummy!

Have excess rolls of skin hanging off your belly? Plastic surgeons have a solution. Known as a tummy tuck, this procedure involves the surgeon making a large incision from hip to hip, and then pulling the skin downwards. The excess skin is then trimmed off and the rest is sewn back onto the body. Sounds a bit like tailoring, doesn't it?

What about looking beautiful on the inside?

There is pretty much a plastic surgery procedure for every perceived physical imperfection, but do you think it's better to remove that imperfection through surgical means or to learn how to live with it?

Do you think a beautiful exterior means that the person is beautiful on the inside too? These are questions one has to ask before making a choice to change one's appearance. Learning how to love your looks is much healthier (and less painful!) than going under the surgeon's scalpel. Instead of focusing on the exterior and worrying if we are beautiful or not, perhaps we should look inwards to see how we can make ourselves better people. That is something no plastic surgeon can ever fix.



Huh? What's That?

- anaesthesia:** prevents patients from feeling pain during an operation through the administering of drugs
- blepharoplasty:** double eyelid surgery
- blood transfusion:** giving the patient a supply of blood from another person
- collagen:** a natural protein found in human connective tissues, such as skin and bones
- liposuction:** an operation to remove excess fat from the body
- rhinoplasty:** an operation to change the shape and appearance of the nose
- sutures:** stitches to sew up cuts



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