

Ask the right questions before opting for plastic surgery

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Credit: Lynn Greyling/public domain

Making the decision to undergo plastic surgery should not be taken

lightly, according to Dr. Shayan Izaddoost, associate professor in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery and in molecular and cellular biology at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of plastic surgery at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center.

He discusses the considerations one should take before committing to a procedure.

Find the right plastic surgeon

When you begin the search for the right plastic surgeon, the first thing to look for is whether they are a board-certified plastic surgeon.

"Board certification is the only designation we have in medicine that says that the physician you're seeing is adequately trained and has performed the procedure enough that they are deemed competent by the American Board of Plastic Surgery," Izaddoost said.

It's always a good idea to consult more than one plastic surgeon to see what different surgeons suggest, he said. It's important to find a surgeon you trust and get along with. It's also appropriate to ask a plastic surgeon for before and after pictures from their procedures.

The surgeon should spend time with you to address all of your concerns. They should tell you not only the benefits of a procedure, but also the risks and what they will do to mitigate these risk and improve your outcomes. A [plastic surgeon](#) should present options for the types of procedures that can be done and explain why they recommend one over another for you.

See if you are a good candidate

Your current health or the status of other illnesses may preclude you from being a good candidate for different types of [plastic surgery](#). Each procedure, invasive or noninvasive, has risk associated with it, and it's important to ask what the benefits and risks are of each procedure. Talk to your surgeon about what you can do to mitigate these risks preoperatively and after the [surgery](#). You should discuss whether a different type of procedure would be better because of your condition.

Female patients who want to have a cosmetic procedure should consider whether they want to have children and, if so, whether they plan to breastfeed. It's important to wait until after you have children for procedures such as an abdominoplasty, or a tummy tuck, since having children stretches out the abdominal wall and skin.

If you are planning on having children soon, it is best to wait until after you finish breastfeeding to perform breast procedures, Izaddoost said. This is because some breast procedures may reduce your ability to breastfeed. In addition, because breastfeeding can stretch the skin of the breast, it can reverse the benefits of a breast lift or reduction. As a rule of thumb, it is recommended to wait six months after completing lactation prior to undergoing procedures.

Patients with a heart arrhythmia or a family history of heart conditions should see a cardiologist to ensure they can tolerate the surgery.

Finally, if you plan to lose weight, it's best to do it ahead of the surgery.

"Whatever your goals are in terms of rejuvenation, you can have a better outcome and decrease the risk of complications if you have a healthy weight and lifestyle," Izaddoost said.

Losing weight after a procedure could lead to skin excess that could have been removed at the time of surgery. This is true for an abdominoplasty

as well as a breast lift or reduction. In both cases, as you lose weight the skin tends to loosen and hang. All this skin can be removed at the time of the surgery, improving your final aesthetic outcome.

Check your calendar

When discussing the procedure with a surgeon, be aware of what other events are going on in your life ahead of and after the procedure. If you have a young child or are planning a trip, you should be sure that the surgery and recovery schedule fits with your schedule.

While less invasive procedures have faster recovery times, major surgical procedures that last up to two to three hours, such as abdominoplasty, breast reduction and breast augmentation, can have a recovery time of three to six weeks.

Your recovery time also depends on what you do for a living. While someone with a desk job could return to work at two to three weeks, someone with a more physically demanding job should wait longer to return to work.

"The general rule of thumb is that your incisions are 80 percent healed at five to six weeks after major surgery," Izaddoost said. "At this point, the strength of the incisions is good, and you can start doing regular exercise and return to your full level of activity after consulting with your surgeon."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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