

Report finds 93 US deaths after cosmetic surgery in Dominican Republic since 2009

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A window display advertises low-cost "Brazilian butt lift" cosmetic surgery procedures outside a clinic in Miami on Friday, March 22, 2019. On Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 93 Americans have died after cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic since 2009, with many of the recent deaths involving a procedure known as a Brazilian butt lift. Credit: AP Photo/Ellis Rua, File

U.S. health officials say 93 Americans have died after cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic since 2009, with many of the recent deaths involving a procedure known as a Brazilian butt lift.

The operation has grown in popularity recently and has led to deaths in other countries as well, including the U.S. A [report](#) issued Thursday by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention could not say how common these deaths are or whether they are more common in the Dominican Republic.

The report suggests steps that [medical tourists should consider](#) before traveling to get work done.

"Be informed about who is doing your [surgery](#), the qualifications of the person doing your surgery, and whether or not the facility is capable of doing the surgery and whether it is capable of providing adequate post-operative care—which is crucial," said Dr. Matthew Hudson, the study's first author.

A Brazilian butt lift involves injecting fat. The [report](#) included details of about two dozen of the deaths, and most were the result of fat or [blood clots](#) getting into the lungs or bloodstream.

Complications from cosmetic surgery are not unique to the Dominican Republic. Reports of deaths after cosmetic surgeries have repeatedly surfaced in the United States, perhaps most often in Florida. The CDC on Thursday issued a separate [report](#) about 15 cases of bacterial infections in women who went to one Florida cosmetic surgery center in 2022.

Sporadic reports also have come out of Mexico, including last year when U.S. patients were stricken with fungal meningitis after undergoing cosmetic procedures in the border city of Matamoros. Two clinics were

closed and a dozen deaths reported.

The Dominican Republic is known as a friendly island vacation spot, and some doctors there advertise in the U.S., offering [breast implants](#), liposuction and other operations at lower prices. After an increase in U.S. deaths in 2019 and 2020, the U.S. Embassy contacted the CDC, which investigated along with the Dominican Republic Ministry of Health.

They tallied 93 [cosmetic surgery](#)-related deaths of U.S. citizens in the Dominican Republic from 2009 to 2022, or an average of about seven a year. All but one were women. More than half of the deaths occurred since 2019, coinciding with the increasing popularity of Brazilian butt lifts. In the U.S., nearly 29,000 of those procedures were done in 2022, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

The procedure commonly involves liposuction of fat from the hips, lower back, thighs or other areas. The fat is then injected in the buttocks to change the shape or size. Risks include fat being injected too deeply, making its way into the bloodstream and blocking key arteries or veins.

Autopsy records show that was the cause of [death](#) for 11 of 20 deaths, said Hudson, who is now at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

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