

THE TOP 10 MYTHS ABOUT

plastic surgery
by SAM M. SUKKAR, MD, FACS

MYTH 1 Only plastic surgeons can legally perform plastic surgery.

Many people are surprised to learn that it is perfectly legal throughout the United States for medical doctors in any specialty to offer plastic surgery, or open up a Medical Spa or Laser Center. The best way to know your surgeon is qualified is to choose an ASPS Member Surgeon. A Plastic Surgeon who is board certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery has gone through rigorous training in both cosmetic and reconstructive surgical techniques, and is skilled at managing difficult surgical problems. ASPS Member Surgeons have at least six years of surgical training and experience, with a minimum of three years of plastic surgery; operate only in accredited facilities; and fulfill continuing medical education requirements.

MYTH 2 A specific procedure will cost the same no matter who performs it or where it is performed.

How a given plastic surgery procedure is priced involves many variables — including geographic location, surgeon expertise and demand, the time and effort your procedure requires, the costs of anesthesia, surgical facility fees, labs, and more. Ask your surgeon about all costs involved, and be sure you understand fully what you are paying for. Differences in fee quotations between surgeons may actually represent major differences in your safety — both during surgery and in the recovery room. You want to be confident that, if an emergency occurs, the medical team has the skills and equipment needed. Many plastic surgeons offer patient financing plans.

MYTH 3 It is best not to ask many questions of a surgeon. They hate questions, and the answers will only scare you.

Asking questions is the best way to get to know your surgeon. It gives you the opportunity to learn about their qualifications, experience, and demeanor. The more you know about your procedure and your surgeon, the more confident you will feel, making you a better, more active partner throughout the process.

MYTH 4 Surgeons cannot allow you to speak to previous patients.

Reputable surgeons will have no problem supplying you with contact information for some of their recent patients. Speaking with patients about their experience and results is a great way to learn more about your surgeon, your procedure, and what to expect.

MYTH 5 All plastic surgeries are performed in accredited facilities.

ASPS Member Surgeons perform surgeries only in accredited facilities. However, surgeons who are not board certified by ASPS may or may not use nonaccredited facilities. Making sure your procedure will be performed in an accredited facility will significantly reduce safety risks and increase your comfort level.

MYTH 6 Plastic surgeons perform only reconstructive surgery; cosmetic surgeons do “beauty” work.

Plastic surgery encompasses both cosmetic and reconstructive surgery. ASPS Member Surgeons are trained, experienced, and qualified to perform both cosmetic and reconstructive procedures on the face and all areas of the body. Because many cosmetic procedures are rooted in reconstructive plastic surgery, ASPS Member Surgeons are uniquely qualified to handle your cosmetic needs.

MYTH 7 “Extreme Makeovers” are commonplace in plastic surgery practices.

Not at all. Reality shows do not show reality! “Extreme makeovers” are far from routine or common in plastic surgery. Most patients have a specific area of the body they want to improve. In your consultation, your surgeon will ask you questions to better understand your

medical history and your hopes and goals for plastic surgery. A reputable surgeon will tell you if a surgery is not wise for you based on your medical history.

MYTH 8 Silicone breast implants cannot be used.

In late 2006, the FDA approved the use of silicone gel filled breast implants for cosmetic enhancement in women 22 years of age and older. This gives a surgeon more flexibility in selecting the implant device that will help optimize your aesthetic outcome. The main advantage of silicone breast implants over saline is that there is less palpability, wrinkling and ridging of the implant. For this reason, silicone implants feel and look more natural. You can find a wealth of scientific information on the safety of silicone breast implants at www.breastimplantsafety.org.

MYTH 9 Only the rich & famous get plastic surgery.

A study in 2005 found that almost 60% of people who were seriously considering plastic surgery or had one performed recently had household incomes between \$30,000-\$90,000 a year. 40% of that 60% reported an annual income of \$60,000 or less.

MYTH 10 “Board certified” always means the same thing.

Unfortunately, no. Any group of medical professionals can create its own “certification” board. ASPS Member Surgeons are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery—a group designated by the American Board of Medical Specialties to oversee credentialing in plastic surgery of the face and all areas of the body. Their certification requires passing rigorous oral and written exams.

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