

FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

TODAY

FOURTH QUARTER 2004, VOL. 18, No. 4

To Tell or Not to Tell ... That is the Question

You are planning to have a cosmetic procedure and debating whom you should tell. The earlier you determine if you are going to tell anyone, the better. If telling, you can educate these people on the procedure, the recovery process, and how you expect them to support you. If not telling, you can prepare yourself to field questions as your face continues to heal and improve. Consider the following factors when deciding who will be in the know and who won't know.



For more extensive procedures or a combination of procedures, you will need time to recover and heal. If you would prefer not to inform your co-workers and friends, then you should plan to take some vacation time.

Support System

A support system can make the process less stressful and more comfortable for the patient. Before, during, and after the procedure, Elena had the support of her family and her friends. "Months ago, I talked with my family about getting a

Society Acceptance

Cosmetic surgery is more widely accepted than it ever was—thanks in part to the deluge of reality television shows and also to a more educated public. The majority of patients do tell others because they are proud of their enhancements and are willing to share with everyone that they are making steps to better themselves. "I couldn't keep my experience to myself," says Matt. "It was life-changing; I wanted to share it and encourage others to seek it as well." It is no longer necessary to keep your surgery a secret, society perceives you as being proactive, smart, and chic.

Extent of Procedure

If you are considering a minimally invasive procedure, such as Botox or a light chemical peel, most people will not be able to pinpoint what exactly has changed. Your closest companions may notice something is different, but may not credit your refined facial features. "After Botox, co-workers started asking what I was doing to look younger and happier—was it my diet or a new exercise regime?" says Kathy. "Although they would have never guessed it, I was happy to tell them about Botox."

facelift," she says. "After the surgery, my mom spent a week at my house and friends stopped by with movies to keep me company as well."

If your family is not supportive of your decision for facial plastic surgery, you may want to consider telling and enlisting the support of friends or neighbors. "My family was offended that I wanted to change the family nose," says Aaron. "Most of my family was insensitive to my feelings and perhaps even resented that I was going to look and feel better after my procedure." Aaron had the support of his girlfriend, her family, and his friends. "I was so excited...I told everyone. Even people at work were supportive and encouraging," he comments.

Your Personality

Some people are introverts and naturally more private about their lives. If you do not feel comfortable explaining it to people, then don't. There are ways to camouflage your post-operative appearance to avoid inquiries.

Remember, it is your choice. You will get the full support for your decision and the best care possible during the process. ■

Achieving a Younger, More Striking Appearance with Implants

Many patients who are seeking a younger looking appearance and refinement of their profile are happy with the results of facial implants. Facial plastic surgeons are able to replace bony deficiency, to improve balance of facial features, or to reposition the sagging skin upward and outward to fill hollows and depressions.

Mid-face Implants

One of the strongest characteristics of youth is fullness of the cheeks, indicating an abundance of healthy soft tissues and fat that is present under the skin. Also a sign of vitality, the cheekbones are responsible for defining the face, highlighting the eyes, and adding overall balance to your features. Not everyone can retain contour and fullness with age. Not everyone has prominent cheekbones.

When there is depletion of tissue and fat and minimal cheekbones, the skin sags, appears flattened or sunken, and may cause folds and wrinkles around the mouth. The mid-face implant can hold up the collapsed tissue and restore the youthful appearance of adequately padded skin at healthy levels of distention and elasticity. This improves the contour, creates balance, and bolsters self-esteem.

Mid-face implants are performed under local anesthesia with sedation. It may be combined with other cosmetic procedures such as rhinoplasty or facelift or chin augmentation. After the face is thoroughly cleansed with an antiseptic cleansing agent, a small incision is made inside of the mouth in the crease above the upper lip. A pocket is created over the bone.

The implants come in a variety of sizes and shapes ranging from three to six millimeters. Each patient is evaluated for proper sizing and shape of the implant that will provide the desired effect.

The sterile implant is placed into the pocket. The implant is secured and the incision is sutured closed. Supportive tissue forms



Several types of implants are used to augment the soft tissues of the midface. Photo courtesy of The Face Book, published by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

around the implant after a few weeks; and once healed, it will feel like your normal underlying bone structure.

Chin Implants

Many people have a chin that is too small for their face. Flat, under-projected chins are usually genetic, although traumatic injury or previous jaw surgery can also result in deformity. Chin augmentation can help restore balance to the lower face and jawline.

Take a look at your profile. A weak or receding chin can sometimes make your nose seem larger or more projected. During consultation, you can discuss if a chin implant will bring your profile back into balance or if a combination of rhinoplasty (nose surgery) and chin augmentation is the solution.

Some patients seek to reduce the appearance of deep grooves from each corner of the lip down to the chin. These “marionette lines” can be improved by placing small implants along each side of the jaw, just in front of the jowl.

Implants for the chin area come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes. Your implant will be

custom fit to the configurations of your face for optimal results.

Chin augmentation is performed under local anesthesia with sedation. The face is cleansed and a small incision is made underneath the chin or inside the mouth, where gum and lower lip meet. A pocket is created by gently stretching the tissue. The sterile implant is then inserted in front of the bone. The implant is secured and the incision is sutured. When the incision is inside the mouth, no scarring is visible. If the incision is under the chin, the scar is usually imperceptible.

After Implant Surgery

Immediately after surgery, you will probably have a dressing that will remain in place for two to three days. There will be some tenderness;

however, any post-operative discomfort can be controlled with prescribed medications. Most patients feel a stretched, tight sensation after the surgery, but this usually subsides in a week.

Normal activity can be resumed after approximately 10 days. After two weeks there are very little activity restrictions. And, after six weeks, most swelling will be gone and you can enjoy the results of your procedure.

Making the Decision

Facial plastic surgery makes it possible to enhance your appearance, reduce signs of aging and deformities that undermine self-confidence. Facial plastic surgery can improve your looks and your self-image, as well.

If you are considering implants to sculpt and restore the youthful contour of your face, answer these questions:

- Are you in good health?
- Do you have realistic expectations?
- Why do you want to change your appearance?
- Do you understand how the procedure(s) is performed?

Your nose can appear more prominent than it actually is because of other facial features. The noses in these three profiles are identical but look totally different. The first face that shows a normal jaw structure, presents a pleasing appearance. The nose in the center profile appears more prominent because of a receding chin. And the nose on the third face seems to project even more because of a long sloping forehead and a weak chin.



➤ How do you feel this will change your life?

Implants for the mid-face and chin area provide a safe, effective, and long-lasting way to a more youthful appearance. After careful deliberation, make an appointment and discuss any questions, concerns, or ideas about your treatment plan. ■

ASK THE SURGEON



I am tired of my tattoo, is there a way to make it less obvious?

Yes, there are options to make your tattoo less intense and less noticeable. The method of choice is by laser.

Lasers work by producing short pulses of intense light that pass through the top layers of the skin and are selectively absorbed by the tattoo pigment. This laser energy causes the tattoo pigment to partially disintegrate.

The body's white blood cells capture the shattered ink particles and transport them to the liver via the bloodstream.

Although most patients do not require anesthesia, an anesthetic cream or local anesthetic may be used to numb the area. Treatment time is usually limited to a few minutes. The skin may feel sunburned and bruised for a couple of days.

Even after multiple sessions, many tattoos resist complete removal. Make an appointment to have your tattoo evaluated, and discuss the optimal plan to make you more comfortable with your appearance. ■

HEALTH TIP



After exposing your skin to the elements of summer, treat your skin to specialized care. For skin that has suffered sunburn, it is important to avoid any exposure to the sun until the skin has completely healed, usually within one to two weeks. During this time, you may want to take aspirin or ibuprofen to reduce inflammation or control pain. Cold compresses can also help ease discomfort. Make sure you re-hydrate and re-moisturize the skin as it heals. One of the best treatments is using aloe vera gel, a natural product that helps cool, soothe, and heal burned skin. If you do suffer from peeling skin, do not pick or pull at it. Let your skin heal naturally.

Even though the sunny summer days are over, the sun's rays are still damaging. Continue to apply sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. For extended outdoor activities, consider applying a sunblock with SPF of 30, with repeated applications every two hours. ■

WHAT'S NEW?



There are other options for closing an incision besides sutures or staples. Fibrin sealants are gaining wider acceptance for use with facelifts, brow lifts, rhinoplasty, and many other procedures. Fibrin sealants or tissue glue is used to bring the skin together.

The sealant is applied along the incision lines and acts as a vasoconstrictor, closing off the severed capillaries and sealing the incision within a few minutes. There is no need to come back for removal, as the body naturally rids the sealant by the time it is no longer needed. Some surgeons feel that the advantages include higher patient satisfaction, decreased bruising and swelling, faster recovery, and decreased operative time. ■

A receding hair line getting you down? There are viable options

Everyday we lose between 40 to 100 hairs from our head due to the growth cycle of the hair follicle. At any given time, 10 percent of your hair may be in a resting phase; after two to three months, this hair falls out and new hair starts to grow in its place. The growing phase lasts for two to six years at a growth rate of one centimeter per month.

Unfortunately, the new growth is inhibited for two out of every three men, and one out of every five women. They suffer from receding hairlines, pattern baldness, and thinning hair.

Causes of Hair Loss

Approximately 95 percent of hair loss is caused by a condition called androgenetic alopecia—an inherited sensitivity to the effects of androgens (male hormones) on scalp hair follicles. The onset of this condition is due to factors such as genetic predisposition, the presence of the male hormone dihydrotestosterone (DHT), and age.

Hair loss may also be caused or affected by pregnancy, disease, burns, accidents, and certain medications. Depending on the cause of hair loss, you will be evaluated and an optimal plan will be discussed.

Medication

Two medications that have FDA approval for the treatment of androgenetic pattern hair loss are minoxidil and finasteride. Minoxidil (Rogaine®) is applied topically twice a day, available for men and women. Finasteride (Propecia®) is taken orally once a day, for men only. These medications have limited effectiveness, slowing down or stopping altogether the progression of hair loss in the back of the head in less than two-thirds of all men. The only permanent remedy for hair loss is surgical hair restoration, or hair transplantation.

Surgical Restoration

Hair replacement surgery remains the most effective way to achieve hair restoration. The first step is to determine the pattern of balding: frontal



baldness only; front to crown; front and mid-scalp with no thinning at the crown; and crown only balding. This is necessary to effectively plan the donor and recipient site.

The donor site is where the hair will be taken from, usually on the side or the back scalp. Your hair quality will also be evaluated. Light-colored hair and coarse-textured hair produce a look of greater density than fine or dark hair.

The most common procedures are grafting and follicular unit transplantation. Grafting involves taking a strip of hair-bearing scalp, dividing it into several hundred smaller grafts, and then inserting them into the scalp. Follicular unit transplantation—a refinement of micrografting—preserves the entire hair bearing structure (blood vessels and tissue) and under microscopic magnification, the units are inserted into small needle-sized sites in the recipient area. Grafting and follicular unit transplantation may take several sessions over several months to achieve desired results.

Over the last 40 years, hair restoration surgery has come a long way to provide patients with extensive hair grafts in very natural arrangements with extremely high success rates. Take the next step. If you would like to improve the appearance of your scalp, a consultation and open discussion will determine the procedure that might be right for you. ■