

# R New York SIDENT

## health

### Trading Faces

#### Increasingly Popular, Plastic Surgery Requires Much Planning Ahead

By Debra Hirschfeld

The popularity of plastic surgery makeover shows like ABC's "Extreme Makeover" and Fox's "The Swan" mirrors the growing national interest in elective cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic plastic surgeries, intended to improve a person's appearance and boost self-esteem, increased by 32 percent in 2003, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), with a rise in 2004.

It is critical for patients to educate themselves on the various procedures and risks, in order to make an informed decision when choosing a plastic surgeon.

#### Picking a Plastic Surgeon

Many patients assume that there are laws requiring doctors to have special qualifications to perform cosmetic surgery. But any licensed physician can perform plastic surgery without having distinct credentials. It is important to check that a doctor is not only board certified but certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, the only plastic-surgery organization recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties. This certification ensures that the doctor has been formally trained and is qualified to perform cosmetic and reconstructive surgeries.

To narrow the search, doctors suggest asking friends for recommendations, calling nearby hospitals for a list of plastic surgeons or asking another doctor for a referral. "Since this is elective surgery, the patient really has the time to carefully select his or her surgeon," says Dr. Gerald H. Pitman, a spokesman for the ASPS.

#### The Consultation

Before any surgery, the patient meets with one or more doctors to discuss the desired procedure and the intricacies of the operation. This is an opportunity for the surgeon to judge whether the patient is a good candidate for the surgery and for the patient to assess whether the doctor is the right fit.

"You don't want to come into the office saying, 'What do you think I

need?'" says Dr. Steve Fallek, a board-certified plastic surgeon. "You should have an idea which operation or what area is of interest to you." The final decision should be left up to the patient.

#### Asking the Right Questions

When meeting with a potential doctor, there is much a patient should ask: How long will the operation last? Will you perform the entire surgery? How many times have you performed the procedure? What are the potential complications? How long is the recovery time? When can I get back to work? How much will it cost? Is it covered by insurance?



What a Pair: Plastic surgery gains popularity

The surgeon should have no problem answering these questions and should provide a well-rounded picture of what to expect. Most important, the patient must trust the doctor.

"Probably the most important thing [is] that the doctor makes you feel comfortable," says Kayte Kuebler, a 23-year-old teacher who had nose surgery. "The doctor made me feel so relaxed, so comfortable, and he reassured me about any questions. Nothing was mundane to him."

#### Be Realistic

It is essential that patients have realistic expectations about what plastic surgery can do for them. There are no guarantees that the result will be exactly as expected. And although it can change a person's appearance, it can't change other aspects of his or her life. That can only happen on TV.

Debra Hirschfeld is a contributing writer to New York Resident. Please send responses to news editor Michael Y. Park at michaelp@resident.com.

'Tomb Raider' Norma Vally Shows Women How to Do It Themselves

SAV 'OUI' TO FRENCH FILM

% APY

op by any com

Win a Ski Trip For Two Details Inside

# Do Your Home Work Sprucing Up Your Home With Examining Your And Finding the Right

MOMS MARCH AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE



North Fork

Increase Interest To open an Inc North Fork