

SKIN



DEEP

Would you go under the knife?

As you flip through mags playing **HAS SHE OR HASN'T SHE**, do you ever wonder, **IS IT FOR ME?**

Angelina's lips, Gisele's cheekbones, Miranda's button nose – who hasn't looked at pictures of celebrities and compared them to what they see in the mirror? But could an image of a celebrity tempt you to change your look? Statistics show that women are heading to plastic surgeons in increasing numbers, but it's not necessarily for major, surgical changes. Sydney-based surgeon Dr Jeremy Hunt says the top non-surgical procedures in his practice are for Botox, fillers and injectables, which are steadily increasing in popularity.

PATIENTS ARE GETTING YOUNGER

Dr Steve Merten, a NSW plastic surgeon, agrees consumer demands are changing. "Fifteen years ago, women aged 18-35 wouldn't have considered facial surgery, but now that's the busiest group having it. The new technologies and treatments now available, especially non-surgical procedures such as fillers and light therapies, are changing the demographic of people having treatment."

FOREVER YOUNG

New statistics from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons show that in 2008, almost half a million cosmetic, minimally invasive procedures (such as Botox, fillers and laser treatments) were performed on women aged 20-29. That same age group underwent 271,142 invasive procedures (such as rhinoplasty, breast augmentation and liposuction). Closer to home, *The Cosmetic Surgery Report: Report to the NSW Minister for Health*, showed that in 1999, one-quarter of female patients in Australia were aged 25-34, with seven per cent falling into the 15-24 age group.



Plastic surgery is no longer the domain of the super-vain. "The majority of my clients are women aged 25-40," says Dr Hunt. "They are informed professionals who have made educated decisions about changing their bodies."

WHAT TODAY'S WOMEN WANT

The last official Australian survey on plastic surgery was in 1999, but Dr Hunt believes our surgery trends are about 12 months behind the US. It was there that the most popular procedures last year were breast augmentation, liposuction, rhinoplasty, eyelid surgery and tummy tucks. "An American Society of Plastic Surgeons report says 90 per cent of patients are female, and since the year 2000 there has been a 70 per cent increase in procedures," he says.

Dr Merten has identified combination therapies – where patients are having multiple treatments performed in the one session – as an emerging trend. "Procedures such as breast implants and tummy tucks being done together

are becoming more frequent. It's a consumer expectation pushed by cosmetic reality-TV shows. Special-event plastic surgery, such as wedding parties having procedures, is also growing in popularity. There is a focus on time, and patients want to maximise their appearance, with everyone working towards that goal – much like going on a group diet."

RISKY BUSINESS

Although there has been a significant rise in surgery over the past few years, there will always be those who find the idea of syringes, scalpels and implants a little bit too Michael Jackson for their liking. Dr Hunt says patients need to consider that every surgical procedure carries potential risks and complications.

"Plastic surgery is not a concrete science and there can be disappointing results," he says. "To avoid this, patients need to have realistic expectations and surgeons need to explain the likely results." ▶

No lack of perkiness here ... but Victoria Beckham still denies breast surgery.



Does getting implants mean your breasts won't sag and will stay perky?

Implants will increase the size of your breasts, but gravity will still continue to have an effect, and with time it's possible that your breasts will sag.

"WILL BOTOX MAKE MY FACE COLLAPSE?"

Your questions answered

Q What's the difference between a plastic surgeon and a cosmetic surgeon? Plastic surgeons do eight years' specialised training and are members of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS). Anyone with a medical degree can call themselves a cosmetic surgeon, as there is no official recognition of the term.

Q Botox freezes facial muscles, but does it also reduce facial sensation? No, Botox only affects the muscle – it has no effect on your ability to feel. If it is badly done, it can certainly cause muscular shape problems, but when it's done properly this should never happen.

Q What should I be looking for in a surgeon? Visit different surgeons until you find one you feel comfortable with, and who understands your needs and expectations. Ask to see their qualifications and view past examples of their work. The Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons website (www.plasticsurgery.org.au) is a great reference.

Q Can a nose job ruin my sense of smell? No, after the initial pain, your smell will return to normal.

Q Can I still examine my breasts for lumps if I have implants? Yes. The implant is placed behind the breast tissue, so you can still easily feel your natural tissue and tell if lumps are forming.

Q After getting liposuction, will I put on weight? Liposuction will permanently remove some fat cells, but if you continue to eat more calories than you can burn off, the remaining fat cells will allow you to continue to put on weight.

Q Is it safe to get discounted surgery overseas? The main problem is you won't have access to aftercare. Even the best surgeons can have complications, and these are best managed by the original doctor, who can give you ongoing support.

Q Will I lose nipple sensation after a breast enlargement? In some cases, nipple sensation can be decreased or lost, particularly if larger implants are used.

Q Can a surgeon take fat from one area of my body and inject it elsewhere? Yes, this method has been used to increase volume in lips and cheeks.

KRISTA'S STORY

"I was 15 when I began feeling self-conscious about the size and shape of my nose, and it didn't help that I was being teased about it at school. As I got older, I noticed it more and more, and decided that when I turned 20, I was going to get a nose job.

I had initial doubts, and researched for two years, comparing before and after shots and reading about the surgery. When I asked my parents to come to the consultation with me in Sydney, they tried to talk me out of it and told me I was beautiful as I was, but I was adamant. Dr Darryl Hodgkinson answered all their questions and we all left feeling very reassured about the procedure.

Once I'd had the surgery, it took about 10 days to recover. There was some bruising,

but not a lot of swelling, so with lots of rest I soon felt normal. What a transformation! I was shocked when I first looked in a mirror – I didn't expect my nose to look so good! I used to avoid standing with my profile to someone. Now I don't have a problem with people looking at me in social situations.

I'd do it all again in a heartbeat. The surgery wasn't just about having a smaller nose, it was about changing something I was insecure about, so I could discover the confidence and self-assurance others took for granted."

Dr Hodgkinson adds: "The result harmonised Krista's naturally lovely features. Her nose blends in nicely."



BEFORE



AFTER

Q Can I get a Medicare rebate on my plastic surgery?

Procedures that are for functional reasons (say a broken nose or a breast reduction for medical reasons), rather than aesthetic, attract a rebate. It is usually a percentage of the surgery.

Q Is there a danger that my implants could leak or burst?

Current implants are made of a cohesive gel and the risk of rupture is low. In the event of a rupture, the gel sticks to itself and doesn't leak outside the shell of the implant.

Q How long until the bruising and swelling subsides?

It depends on the procedure, but usually early bruising is gone in five to 10 days and most post-operative swelling subsides within six weeks.

Q If you're not happy with the results, do you still have to pay for it?

Generally speaking, yes. Most surgeons will have mechanisms in place to resolve financial conflict over poor results.

Q Can a surgery that results in a poor outcome ever be completely corrected?

In most cases revisional surgery will improve the outcome, but there's no guarantee it can be fully corrected.

Q Could my breasts turn out lopsided after a reduction?

Every surgical procedure carries risks, and asymmetry is a potential complication.

Q Could a nose job render me unrecognisable?

A nose job is designed to improve the balance between your nose and the rest of your face – it shouldn't make you unrecognisable. **Renata Gortan** *COSMO*

HOPE'S STORY

"I didn't hate my 10E breasts, but they were cumbersome and had an effect on the way I dressed. I'm quite small and my breasts were heavy and hung low. I always wore minimiser bras – I never wore low-cut tops because I didn't want to put them 'out there'. When I was 20, Mum saw a breast-reduction story on TV and suggested I think about it.

I talked to my GP and got two referrals. The first surgeon specialised in reconstructive surgery for cancer patients and he was a bit negative. I was young and healthy and he didn't think it was a good idea. The second surgeon, Dr Chalm Williams, was so supportive of my decision. I felt really comfortable with him. He could see I didn't just want the surgery on a whim – it was obvious my breasts didn't fit with the rest of my body.

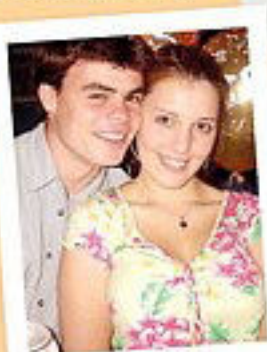
Before I had the surgery, the first option was to try minimising my breasts with liposuction, but because there was no fat on them, just tissue, that didn't work.

Two weeks later, I had the reduction. It took about three weeks to recover. I wore a thick bandage for about a week, and although it wasn't painful, I couldn't lift my arms above my head for two weeks. For the next three months I experienced stabbing pains, but that was part of healing. I also had

to wear sports bras without underwire for a few months. I have scarring beneath my breasts and around the nipples. The scars were red for a year and have slowly faded to blend in with my skin tone.

Dr Williams suggested 10D would be the right size for me, and I'm very happy with the result. I'm now much more confident and I don't hunch over to hide my chest. I can wear normal bras and strapless dresses; it's fabulous not having to worry about fitting into clothes. If you can do something that makes you happy and feel better about yourself, plastic surgery is nothing to be ashamed of."

Dr Williams adds: "Hope got the intended size, shape and, importantly, the psychological benefit of confidence and liking what she sees in the mirror."



WOULD YOU HAVE WORK DONE?



"No, I wouldn't. I would much rather grow old gracefully."
Amy, 21



"Yes. I have some birthmarks I'd really like to get rid of."
Alyssa, 22



"Not now, but in the future maybe a lift or something."
Nora, 23



"No way, because then I wouldn't look like me anymore."
Beckie, 22



"No. I'd be too afraid of waking up and looking like Cheri!"
Tori, 24



"Never say never. It's a decision you need to make on your own."
Michelle, 26