

Advice for people considering cosmetic surgery

More and more people are opting to have cosmetic surgery. Choosing the right surgeon and clinic can be difficult unless choice is informed by balanced advice. The ***Cosmetic Surgery Interspecialty Committee*** – made up of experts representing the different type of doctor who perform cosmetic treatments – offers the following suggestions.

Research the procedure

Read as much as you can about the procedure or treatment you are interested in having. This will help make sure that it is right for you and that you are aware of the pros and cons of treatment. For example:

- The Department of Health has produced a booklet for women considering having breast implants. See www.doh.gov.uk/bimplants/index.htm
- The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) provides information on a wide range of cosmetic surgery procedures. Advice line: 020 7405 2234 www.baaps.org.uk
- The British Association of Otolaryngologists/Head & Neck Surgeons provides information on cosmetic surgery performed by ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeons. Call 020 7404 8373 or email Sharon@bao-hns.demon.co.uk or visit their website at www.entuck.org
- The British Oculoplastic Surgery Society (BOPSS) provides information on oculoplastic surgeons who do specialised plastic surgery of the eyelids, peri-ocular region and face. See www.bopss.org.
- See Annex for further organisations

Choose the right doctor

Get a referral from your GP – they can make sure that, with your permission, any important information about your medical history is passed to the cosmetic surgeon. It also means that your GP can provide for you if you have any problems or need advice after the procedure. If you do not wish to involve your GP, make sure you choose a surgeon who has been recommended to you or obtain as much information as possible before you make your choice.

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You should be offered an initial consultation with the doctor who will perform the operation/procedure. Do not be afraid to ask the doctor about his/her qualifications and expertise in the procedure you are interested in. You may want to ask how many times they have performed the operation and how often complications occur. Feel free to take someone with you, together with a note of any questions you'd like to ask during the consultation.

- The Royal College of Surgeons of England has a leaflet that suggests questions patients having any operation may want to ask. For a copy see www.rcseng.ac.uk or call 020 7405 3474.
- Find out whether a cosmetic surgeon is on the General Medical Council's Specialist Register by calling 020 7915 3630, www.gmc-uk.org. All doctors setting up as cosmetic surgeons for the first time from April 2002 must be on this register. Some cosmetic surgeons practicing before that date may not be on the specialist register but they will be required to keep their practice up to date.
- The Independent Healthcare Forum has produced a guide on the standards that cosmetic surgeons should meet. For a copy call 020 7379 8598 or see www.ihf.org.uk

Find out about the clinic or hospital

The best way to choose a clinic or hospital is through your GP. If this is not an option, make an appointment at a few clinics, so that you can compare prices and the services offered.

- The Healthcare Commission Private and Voluntary Healthcare Directorate holds the register of all private clinics and hospitals that are registered to provide cosmetic surgery in England. It carries out inspections each year to make sure they comply with national minimum standards, including on the quality of the services that they provide. The latest inspection report can be obtained from the Hospital or Clinic by requesting it.
- The Scottish Executive has produced Standards for Specialist Clinics in Scotland, including those offering cosmetic surgery.
- All cosmetic surgery clinics and hospitals are now required to provide a Patient's Guide detailing the services they offer, the cost, as well as information on making

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comments, complaints or suggestions. Ask the clinic for a copy of its Patient's Guide.

Know what to do if something goes wrong

Tell the clinic or hospital where you had treatment if you are unhappy with the result. They may offer you further treatment to rectify the problem.

- Cosmetic surgery clinics and hospitals are required to have a written policy and procedures for handling complaints. Ask to see a copy of this.
- If you continue to be unhappy with the way the clinic, doctor or hospital have handled your complaint and if you have explored all ways with the organisation you were treated, you can make a complaint to the Independent Healthcare Forum on 020 7379 8598 or the Healthcare Commission, which can take action against a clinic if it is in breach of the standards it is expected to meet. Call 020 7448 9200.
- If your complaint is about the conduct or performance of a doctor, you can complain to the General Medical Council. Call the GMC inquiry line 020 7580 7642 or see www.gmc-uk.org

September 2004

COSMETIC SURGERY INTERSPECIALTY COMMITTEE

ANNEX

Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 7973 0300
website: www.asgbi.org.uk

British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 74052234
website: www.baaps.org.uk

British Association of Dermatologists

19 Fitzroy Square
London
W1T 6EH
Tel: 020 73830266
website: www.bad.org.uk

British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 74058074
website: www.baoms.org.uk

British Oculoplastic Surgery Society (BOPSS)

Manchester Royal Eye Hospital
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9NH
Tel: 07092 104764
website: www.bopss.org

British Association of Otorhinolaryngologists

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London
WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 74048373
website: www.orl-baohns.org

British Association of Plastic Surgeons

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 7831 5161
website: www.baps.org.uk

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Patient Liaison Group

Royal College of Surgeons
35-43 Lincoln's Inn Field
London WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 78696045
website: www.rcseng.ac.uk/welcome/information_for_patients

Royal College of Anaesthetists

48-49 Russell Square
London WC1B 4JY
Tel: 020 78131900
website: www.rcoa.ac.uk

Royal College of Ophthalmologists

17 Cornwall Terrace
London NW1 4QW
Tel: 020 79350702
website: www.rcophth.ac.uk

Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh

8 Nicholson Street
Edinburgh EH8 9DW
Tel: 0131 5271600
website: www.rcsed.ac.uk

Royal College of Surgeons England

35-43 Lincoln's Inn Fields
London WC2A 3PE
Tel: 020 74053474
website: www.rcseng.ac.uk

Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow

232-242 St Vincent Street
Glasgow G2 5RJ
Tel: 0141 221 6072
website: www.rcpsg.ac.uk

Independent Healthcare Forum

Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1DU
Tel: 020 7379 8598
website: www.ihf.org.uk