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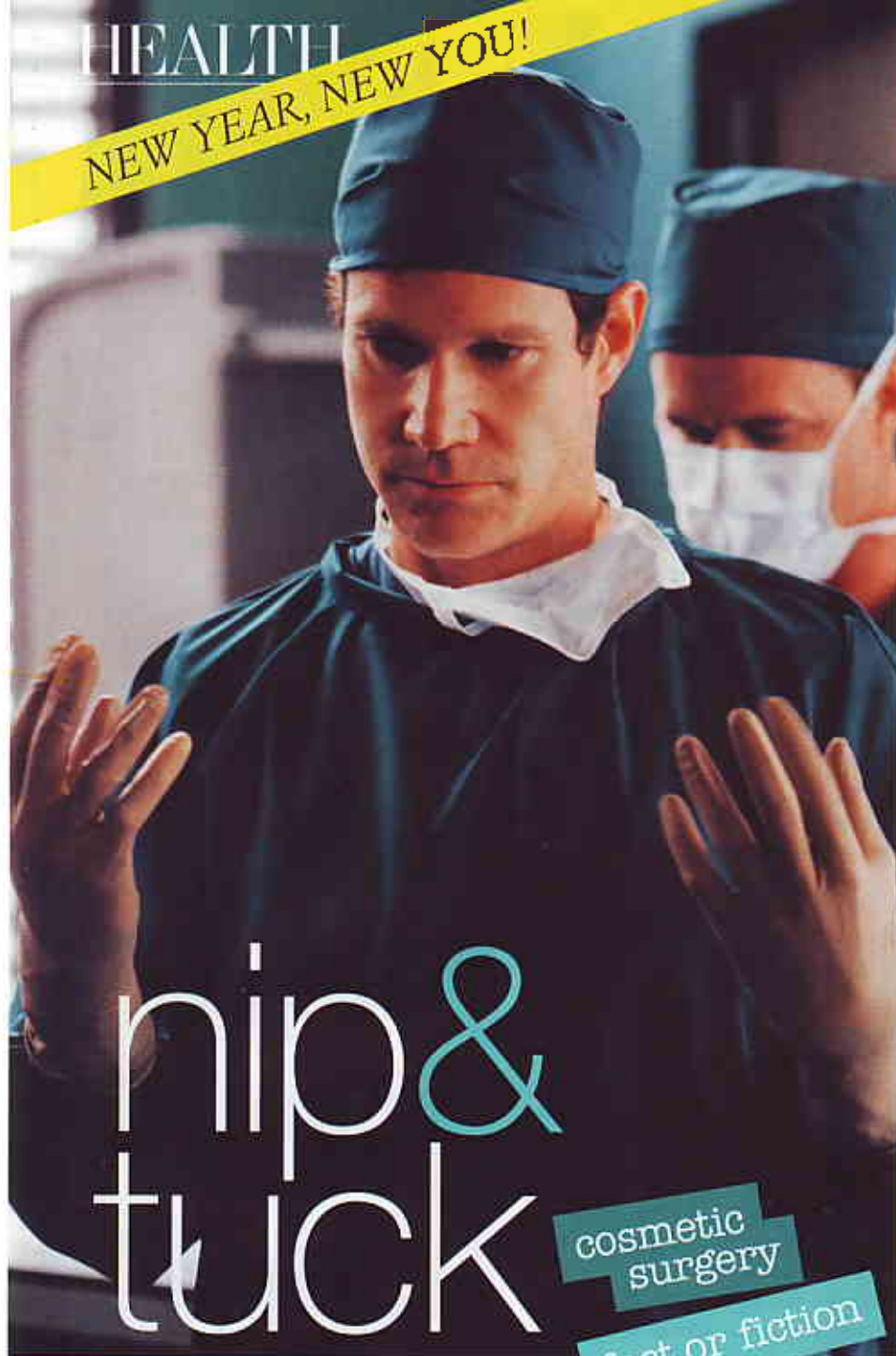
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# nip & tuck

cosmetic surgery

fact or fiction

From implants to transplants, experts give the lowdown on cosmetic procedures  
By Nancy Davis

The average age for breast augmentation is over 35.

**FICTION** Statistics from the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reveal that, in 2004, 52.5 percent of breast augmentation patients were 19–34.

Saline breast implants pose no danger.

**FACT** Currently, there is no scientific link between implants—saline or silicone—and an increased risk of developing diseases. Most doctors agree the

greatest danger is the possible need for additional surgery due to rupture, distorted scar tissue or replacement, as well as the basic risks associated with any operation.

Face-lift patients can never suntan.

**FICTION** Doctors agree that everyone should avoid the sun to prevent skin cancer and premature aging. Shade enthusiasts and sunscreen users have healthier skin—period. But face-lift patients shouldn't assume they're doomed to darkness—they can venture out in the sun. However, for several weeks after surgery, face-lift patients should steer clear of sun exposure because their healing skin could tan abnormally, resulting in blotchiness or discoloured scars.

All nose jobs end up looking the same.

**FICTION** A cute little button nose is not for everyone. Surgeons consider facial proportions, gender and ethnicity as well as each patient's skin, bone and cartilage when preparing to perform rhinoplasty. Surgeons cannot change skin type or thickness, but they can change the structure underneath. An improved appearance means a natural-looking change that suits the patient, so make sure that you scrutinize those before-and-after photos before choosing your surgeon.

Hair transplants are only for men.

**FICTION** Hair-transplant surgery is performed more frequently on men as a result of male pattern baldness; however, many women suffer hair loss or thinning due to age, accident, disease or surgery and they, too, can undergo successful hair-transplant procedures.

If you have breast implants, you cannot breastfeed.

**FICTION** In general, breast implants do not change your ability to breastfeed. What this means is that women with breast implants have ▶▶

the same success and failure rates as women without them. In the general population, 15–20 percent of women have difficulty breastfeeding, so it's important to remember that some post-implant moms may never have been able to breastfeed in the first place. That said, some doctors do avoid making incisions near the nipple to prevent damage to the milk ducts (the preferred entry point is under the breast or through the armpit).

### Those with breast implants should avoid high-impact sports.

**FICTION** It's rare for implants in good shape to tear. However, 10–15 percent of implants will rupture at the 10-year mark due to a weakening of the material over time. High-impact sports can push an already compromised implant to the breaking point. In general, patients are advised to be as protective of their breasts after surgery as they were

before. But keep in mind that the surrounding breast tissue tears more easily than the implant.

### Liposuction eliminates fat permanently. You'll never have to exercise or diet again.

**FICTION** Liposuction does permanently remove a percentage of the fat cells from a particular area. But, in the words of cosmetic plastic surgeon Dr. Julie Khanna, "Fat is evil." Particularly evil is the way that the remaining fat cells, after treatment, can increase in size. Even though there may be fewer of them, they are still sensitive to our bad habits—when our sweets outweigh our sweat, for example. In short, liposuction cannot substitute for good health and exercise, nor is it a weight-loss mechanism; the procedure is meant to contour. Most doctors recommend adopting diet and exercise changes prior to liposuction, relying on the pro-

cedure only to tame trouble spots. The best candidates for treatment are those who are already in pretty good shape—and continue their healthy regimen after surgery.

### The most expensive specialist is the best.

**FICTION** While the most expensive specialist is not necessarily the best, they may have higher prices for any number of legitimate reasons, including extensive training, qualified staff and accredited facilities—all important factors to consider when you're shopping for a surgeon. In contrast, be wary of those offering discounts, coupons and limited-time offers. It's smart to avoid the cheapest doc on the block or any practitioner who is the first to use a technique. Remember that cost is only one factor when choosing a surgeon: check our references, get additional opinions, look at portfolios, determine the quality of care and trust your gut.



An alternative to Cosmetic Surgery?

With new techniques in place, recovery time for cosmetic surgery is minimal and most surgeries don't leave scars.

**FICTION** All incisions leave scars. Although plastic surgeons try to minimize and hide scarring, the way your skin reacts is sometimes unpredictable. As for recovery time, that depends on the extent of the surgery—you may need 1–2 weeks before returning to social activities. Innovations in the field have produced less invasive options and faster recovery times but, generally, if recovery time is less, the visible changes are also minimal. **■**

Sources: Dr. Elizabeth Hall-Findlay, cosmetic plastic surgeon, Banff Plastic Surgery, Banff, Alta.; Dr. Mathew Mosher, plastic surgeon, Langley, B.C.; Dr. Julie Khanna, cosmetic plastic surgeon, The Institute of Cosmetic & Laser Surgery, Oakville, Ont.; Dr. Michael Kraidstein, cosmetic plastic surgeon, Toronto.

## Is a cosmetic surgeon better than a plastic surgeon?

**YOU DECIDE** There is an important difference between cosmetic and plastic surgeons. "Patients need to make sure that the 'surgeon' is actually surgically trained in the specialty," says cosmetic plastic surgeon Dr. Elizabeth Hall-Findlay. "Many non-surgeons are performing cosmetic procedures." Any doctor—even a dentist—can call himself a cosmetic surgeon. A plastic surgeon, on the other hand, studies a minimum of five years after medical school and must pass an exam specializing in aesthetic surgery. Many then go on to study an extra year of



aesthetic plastic surgery. Check with the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons ([www.plasticsurgery.ca](http://www.plasticsurgery.ca)), the Canadian Society for Aesthetic (Cosmetic) Plastic Surgery ([www.csaps.ca](http://www.csaps.ca)), the American Society of Plastic Surgeons ([www.plasticsurgery.org](http://www.plasticsurgery.org)) or the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery ([www.surgery.org](http://www.surgery.org)) to find out if your "cosmetic" surgeon is, in fact, a "plastic" surgeon. —N.D.

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