



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
PLASTIC SURGEONS®



# Do It For **You.**

From Consult to Recovery: The essential guide to navigating your plastic surgery journey.

Welcome!

If you're considering a plastic surgery procedure, you're in the right place.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) gets a lot of questions from prospective patients who are researching plastic surgery procedures, those getting ready for their surgical journey and those who have already gone under the knife but have questions about their recovery.

Plastic surgery - whether cosmetic or reconstructive - has the power to be a life-changing experience. Yet, finding the unfiltered facts and information you need to make informed decisions about restoring or reshaping your body isn't always easy. Education is important, and the more you know going into your procedure, the more satisfied you will be with the outcome and experience.

To help you on your way to becoming a more educated and satisfied patient, ASPS is helping to remove the guesswork by providing this guide to support you in your plastic surgery journey every step of the way. This booklet provides key information you need to be confident in your choices, including questions to ask yourself, questions you should ask your surgeon, and a thorough preoperative planning checklist to maintain your best result.

As with all things aesthetic and subjective, ideal "looks" will vary, but preparation and comprehension should not.

Let's get to it.



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# CHAPTER 1

## Consider Your 'Why'



If you're considering undergoing a plastic surgery procedure, you're in good company. [A recent report](#) showed more than three-quarters of cosmetic-focused plastic surgery practices are seeing more business in the last few years, with nearly 30 percent reporting the demand for cosmetic procedures has at least doubled.

Although plastic surgery has been around for ages, it has become increasingly accessible and even mainstream during the past several decades. In the [ASPS Insights and Trends Report for 2022](#), plastic surgeons were polled on what motivated their patients to book a procedure. The number one reason was the desire to feel refreshed and to look younger.

Nevertheless, every patient who opts for a plastic surgery procedure has a different "Why." One person's motivations are not superior to another, regardless of whether you're looking to finesse a facial feature or booking a body contouring procedure to remove stubborn pockets of fat. The only "wrong" way to approach plastic surgery is to do it for the wrong reasons.

To start off on the right foot, consider the self-reflection questions below. Be thoughtful in your answers so you can best pinpoint your motivation, goals and expectations. Having a clear picture of what success looks like to you - along with the ability to describe your desired outcome - will aid every subsequent conversation you'll have throughout your plastic surgery journey, beginning with your initial consultation.



## **10 questions to ask yourself when considering plastic surgery**

1. How am I doing, physically, mentally and emotionally?
2. What am I hoping to achieve with plastic surgery?
3. Am I prepared and committed to make any necessary lifestyle changes in order to have surgery and a successful postoperative recovery?
4. What is my ideal outcome?
5. Is my desired result a realistic expectation for my procedure?
6. Am I considering plastic surgery for myself and no one else?
7. Have I spent time researching my plastic surgery procedure from reputable sources?
8. Do I know the aftercare and recovery timeline?
9. Do I know who I would ask to care for me for the first 24 hours postop?
10. Can I take the time off necessary to allow myself to fully recover?

## CHAPTER 2

# Do Your Homework

Let's start off with a **POP QUIZ**.

Let's say you want to get a facelift. You schedule a consultation with a:

- A. Plastic surgeon    B. Cosmetic surgeon

Although this isn't meant to be a trick question, it sure can feel like one. Overlapping specialties within aesthetic medicine make researching plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures - not to mention choosing the best provider - both complicated and critical.

### What is board certification and why does it matter?

Diplomas and board certifications don't lie.

All ASPS members are plastic surgeons [certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery \(ABPS\)](#). It seems obvious, but it's not. Make sure *any* surgeon you're considering is board-certified in their specialty. It's important to know that the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) recognizes only 24 specialties, including plastic surgery. The American Board of Plastic Surgery certifies surgeons based on specific criteria, including their operative record, education, experience, credentials and background. This means that a surgeon who is not certified by ABPS may have not completed a key element of training or testing - or may not have even trained in plastic surgery - a definite red flag when evaluating prospective plastic surgeons.

Another important detail to look for when researching providers is to ensure they are practicing within their training and board-certification. It is not uncommon to hear of doctors performing surgeries outside of their qualifications, education and training. If you're interested in a plastic surgery procedure, make sure to consult an ABPS-certified plastic surgeon (since all ASPS members are board-certified plastic surgeons, visit [plasticsurgery.org/find](http://plasticsurgery.org/find) for a listing of qualified surgeons in your area).



CERTIFIED BY  
The American Board  
of Plastic Surgery Inc.™

Remember that earning a medical-specialty certification is intentionally challenging for prospective surgeons and most - if not all - will be proud to tell you about the various board exams they passed.

## Use this checklist of nonnegotiable surgeon credentials for any cosmetic or reconstructive plastic surgery procedure:

- Certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Canada.** Double-check certification date and current status to ensure that the board-certification is valid - this information is available at [abplasticsurgery.org/public](http://abplasticsurgery.org/public).
- Accreditation of the surgery center where your procedure will take place.** This is crucial because it indicates that the facility is routinely monitored for quality, safety and cleanliness. ASPS advises that plastic surgery performed under anesthesia, other than minor local anesthesia and/or minimal oral tranquilization, must be performed in a surgical facility that meets at least one of the following criteria:
  - Accredited by a national or state recognized accrediting agency/organization such as the [American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities](#), the [Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care](#) or the [Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations](#);
  - Certified to participate in the Medicare program under Title XVIII
  - Licensed by the state in which the facility is located.
- Medical training and residency.** Your plastic surgeon should, of course, have attended a medical school, followed by specialized training in plastic surgery. Some directly enter a plastic surgery training program, while others complete general surgery first and plastic surgery training after. Some plastic surgeons subspecialize and complete an extra year of specialty training called a fellowship after their residency.
- ASPS membership.** ASPS Member Surgeons are required to meet rigorous standards, including:
  - Board certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery® (ABPS) or in Canada by The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada®
  - Complete at least six years of surgical training following medical school with a minimum of three years of plastic surgery residency training
  - Pass comprehensive oral and written exams
  - Graduate from an accredited medical school
  - Complete continuing medical education, including patient safety each year
  - Perform surgery in accredited, state-licensed or Medicare-certified surgical facilities
  - Adheres to a strict Code of Ethics



# CHAPTER 3

# Maximize Your Consultation

It's absolutely normal to feel a whirlwind of emotions leading up to the consultation. Whether you're excited, intimidated or overwhelmed, remember that when it comes to surgery, there's no such thing as a silly question. With a little preparation, you have the power to control your experience.

## What is a consultation?

A consultation is a meeting between a prospective patient and a board-certified plastic surgeon prior to booking a plastic surgery procedure.

Think of a preoperative consultation as an informational interview - it's your opportunity to ask questions, strengthen your relationship with your plastic surgeon and align on expectations and desired surgical outcomes. Typically, consultations are conducted in person, although some surgeons provide video consultations as well, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the format, patients should expect to describe the changes they'd like to see as their surgeon examines the areas of concern to determine whether they are an appropriate candidate for the procedure. For video visits, you might be asked to send photographs prior to your consult, or you may be examined virtually via your video visit.



## What does a successful consultation look like?

A successful consultation is one where a patient takes advantage of their face-to-face time with their plastic surgeon and walks away from the appointment feeling educated, empowered and excited.

- **Educated by** fully outlining your options, walking you through details of the procedure, recovery and ongoing aftercare.
- **Empowered by** leaving the decision whether to proceed in your hands. You are equipped with the facts as well as the plastic surgeon's opinion - now the choice is yours.
- **Excited by** the prospect of changing your life and body forever, and the increased satisfaction and confidence it will bring you.





## How many consultations should I have?

As many as you'd like! However, booking a consultation with at least two different plastic surgeons will give you an idea of who you feel more comfortable with.

Start by researching board-certified plastic surgeons in your area (or beyond, if you're open to traveling for the procedure), and narrow down the pool of candidates those you think are best for you.

Not sure quite where to begin? Use the below checklist as a starting point to help you prepare for - and make the most of - your appointment.

### In advance of the appointment

- Research your procedure. Make sure you have a basic foundational knowledge of the surgery. Many patients bring photos of their desired outcomes, and these "wish pics" can help begin the dialogue with your plastic surgeon. Sometimes it's good to show them photos of outcomes you like, and even those that are not your taste. Here are some places to start:
  - [The ASPS website](#)
  - [The ABPS website](#)
  - The website(s) of the plastic surgeon(s) you are considering for your surgery.
  
- Write down your questions for the surgeon to bring with you to your consultation.
  
- Review your medical and surgical history and make a note of all medications and supplements you take regularly. Remember, even though plastic surgery is often elective, it is real surgery and important to treat it like you would any other surgical procedure.

## Questions to ask the plastic surgeon

- Which board certification(s) do you hold?
- How frequently do you perform my desired procedure?
- Have you ever experienced complications during the surgery, and if so, how did you resolve them?
- What are some of the most common complications you see when performing this procedure?
- Do you have before-and-after photos showing patients with similar concerns or body types, and can we review their real-life results together?
- Where will the surgery be performed, and what is the facility's level of accreditation?
- What type of anesthesia is needed for this procedure, and who will be administering my anesthesia?
- If a patient experiences a complication during recovery or has a question about how they're healing, how quickly are you able to see them?
- How should I prepare for surgery?
- What are my payment options?

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A surgeon's bedside manner is just as important as their surgical experience, and it is imperative that patients feel comfortable and safe with their surgeon. Reflect on your overall consultation experience with the below questions.

## Questions to ask yourself

- Did I feel comfortable with this surgeon? Did I feel like I could ask any question I may have had?
- Do I trust this surgeon to make recommendations that are right for me and my body?
- Were the staff members I interacted with friendly, helpful and kind?
- Was I given materials or preparation documents to read about the surgery and what to expect?
- Do I have a full understanding of what I need to do in order to prepare for surgery?

Above all, it is important to develop a strong sense of trust in your plastic surgeon, and if for any reason you did not feel like the surgeon was the right "fit" for you, that's OK! There are plenty of amazing board-certified plastic surgeons who could be a better match for you, and you can use the [ASPS Find a Surgeon tool](#) to search the ASPS member database and connect with other surgeons in your area.

# Preoperative Preparation

Plastic surgery is real surgery, and a successful outcome depends just as much on the patient as the plastic surgeon.

Coming out of your consultation, you should have a solid understanding of what you need to accomplish prior to surgery, as well as any lifestyle or diet modifications your surgeon has requested that you make. For example, many plastic surgeons recommend a list of supplements and vitamins for patients to begin taking ahead of surgery.

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## Here are six considerations that can help you prepare for surgery

- 1. Adjust your diet.** Change your diet following your surgeon's advisement and recommendations. A good rule of thumb is to limit sodium intake at least one week before surgery, and loading up on anti-inflammatory foods, like berries and leafy greens.
- 2. Make a recovery plan.** Knowing that you have established a plan, starting from immediately postop through the first week (at least), will ease your mind. Here are a few key elements your plan should have in place:
  - Confirm the friend or family member who will be escorting you home after surgery.
  - Obtain any necessary PTO approvals from your work so you can take the time you need to properly heal. Remember, you may not be able to use disability leave in certain states after elective procedures.
  - Arrange for childcare support, if needed, as well as any pets or household chores that you may be unable to do in your early recovery.
  - Stock your fridge with healthy food and have meals ready to go in the freezer so that you can relax and recover, rather than worry about what's for dinner. (Trust us, you're not going to want to cook.)
- 3. Purchase any post-surgery supplies.** If you aren't sure what you need, call your surgeon's office and ask. You should also fill all of your postoperative prescriptions in advance.
- 4. Mentally prepare.** It's important to be in the right frame of mind before surgery, and the more knowledge you have, the more relaxed and confident you're able to feel throughout your journey. Make sure you, your caretaker and your loved ones thoroughly read any literature or preoperative information provided by your surgeon and keep them handy for reference.
- 5. Set up a "recovery area" in your home.** This cozy spot will be where you plan to sit or rest with activities you'll do as you recover. Move daily essentials and medications to nearby, easy-to-reach places so you can minimize bending and stretching as much as possible. Don't forget the phone charger!
- 6. Make it enjoyable.** Your activity is going to be limited for a while, so consider ways you can make recovery a more comfortable experience. This could mean splurging on a plush bathrobe or pair of slippers, or even buying a few new books you've wanted to read. Ask friends and family for binge-worthy shows to stream. Now's the time!

# CHAPTER 5

## Surgery Day

Surgery day will look different for every patient and surgeon, but there are specific elements and tasks that every board-certified plastic surgeon is required to complete.

Here's a sample timeline of what a patient can expect to happen, from start to finish.



### Before leaving home

- **Follow your doctor's prep instructions as directed.** Your surgical team will prescribe specific instructions on limitations to eating and drinking prior to surgery. These instructions will depend on your surgery, so pay careful attention to this during your preoperative process.
- **Wear comfortable clothing that will be easy to put on/take off.** For example, if you're having a breast operation, a button-down shirt is best, so you don't have to lift or move your arms. Pants with elastic waistbands and slip-on shoes are always a good idea.

### Arriving at the surgery center

- **Paperwork.** There may be a few final documents to sign before your surgery begins.
- **Meeting with the surgeon and anesthesia provider.** You'll see both your plastic surgeon and anesthesiologist prior to surgery. Expect to answer several questions from the anesthesia provider to determine how much medication you'll need.
- **Changing into surgery smock and surgeon markings.** Immediately prior to surgery, you'll disrobe and put on a surgical smock. Some offices, depending on the length of the procedure, will provide compression socks for patients to wear. Your surgeon will make surgical markings on your body where the procedure will be focused, as well as review the surgical plan and consent with you one final time. This is a great time to ask any last questions you may have.
- **Meet and greet.** You will meet the full surgical team who will be in the operating room with you, including any nurses, students, assistants and possibly medical device representatives.
- **Compression garments.** In the O.R., you may be asked to wear pneumatic compression boots to help with circulation before, during and after your procedure, especially for longer surgeries.







## Surgery

- **It will be cold.** Most O.R.s are deliberately chilly – this is normal.
- **You'll drift off to sleep.** After laying down on the O.R. bed, your anesthesiologist will administer the anesthesia, and you'll drift off to sleep. Some plastic surgeons like to tell jokes to put the patient at ease, while others encourage positive affirmations and thoughts. Feel free to discuss this at your consultation.
- **Your body is secured.** Once you're asleep, your body is prepped and draped using a sterile technique. Your head and arms are also gently secured for safety.

## After surgery

- **You wake up in the recovery room.** Feeling groggy, sleepy or “out of it” are totally normal and expected. A nurse will check on you after you wake up and likely encourage you to have something to eat or drink.
- **You go home.** After you meet specific medical criteria in the recovery area, the surgical team will approve you for discharge, and you'll be allowed to leave with your caretaker. But take all the time you need in the recovery room with your nurse.
- **Start medication.** Your surgeon will provide you with specific instructions about what medications to take following your procedure. Consider making a chart with the times of your medications and even setting alarms on your phone so that you stay on top of your medications.



**Rest! Take it easy, you just got out of surgery!**

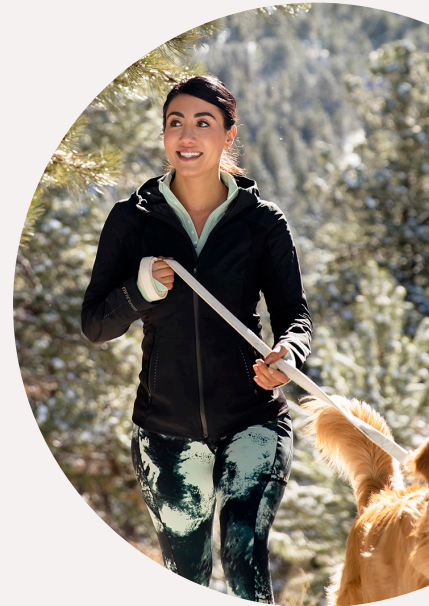
# CHAPTER 6

## Stay the Recovery Course

Recovery from any surgery, plastic surgery included, is an entirely unique experience. It's important to not compare your recovery timeline to what you see on social media (which may or may not be true) or read online. Trust that your body is taking the time it needs to heal and refer often to your care team to help establish your goals for every week of recovery. Although it can be frustrating to have limited mobility or activity, be patient with yourself and your healing process.

Immediate recovery usually spans the first couple weeks, and ongoing care and maintenance is everything after. Taking both phases seriously will ensure that you achieve the best possible outcome.

There are several key pillars of recovery, including postop care, health and nutrition and physical activity.



### Postop care

Depending on the procedure performed, there may be specific aftercare efforts that your surgeon recommends. These may include physical therapy, tissue massage, activity restrictions, postoperative garments or scar treatments (once your body has healed) to aid your recovery. You might also have wound care that involves specific dressing to the surgical area or stitches. These aftercare instructions will all depend on the surgery you received.



### Diet

Your surgeon may recommend a postop diet with specific foods to incorporate or avoid in your recovery process. It is important that you eat a balanced diet. Hydration is also key. For example, someone recovering from liposuction may be instructed to stay away from sodium, as that can lead to water retention and exacerbate swelling.


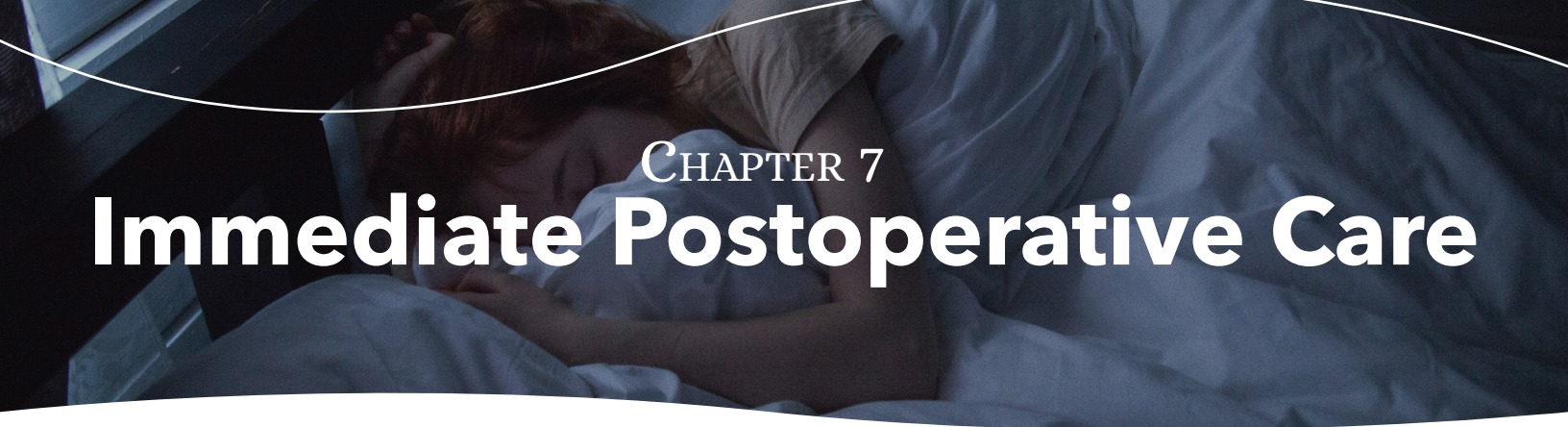


### Activity

Patients should expect their activities to be limited for at least the first month after surgery. Your surgeon will let you know when you're cleared to return to the gym, but most surgeons agree that getting up and walking around every hour or so in the days after surgery will help tenfold.

## CHAPTER 7

# Immediate Postoperative Care



Your recovery time will vary in length and intensity depending on the procedure you had done. Every recovery and every surgery will look a little different - and that is not only normal, but expected. Plastic surgery patients should also expect their aftercare to evolve as their recovery continues, especially around the two-week mark. After the acute recovery phase, ongoing care and maintenance will still be required, yet it will again vary based on the procedure performed and each patient's unique healing process. You may even notice that one side of your body heals or looks different than the other.

In the first few days after surgery, patients can expect

- Discomfort or pain
- Bruising
- Swelling
- Soreness
- Fatigue
- Limited range of motion or pain with motion

Your physician will inform you of signs of a medical emergency, in which case you should call the office immediately. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Fever
- Redness, swelling or sudden changes in the surgical site
- Prolonged vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Calf or lower extremity pain or swelling
- Excessive bleeding from your surgical site
- Opening or bleeding of your surgical incision

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### Below are some of plastic surgery's tried-and-true remedies

- Implementation of specific supplements into the patient's diet.
- Some surgeons recommend specific skincare products to reduce the appearance of bruising, and, when appropriate, surgical scars.
- Turmeric powder, starting at two weeks postop, can help resolve any lingering or persistent swelling. However, it is also a blood thinner, so follow your surgeon's guidance on when - and if - to begin intake.
- Hydration - and lots of it - is crucial to sustaining metabolism and digestion, which can slow down a bit in the days after surgery. Your physician may prescribe or recommend stool softeners for the first few days to get things moving.
- High protein diets and shakes may be recommended, However, not all diets are appropriate for every person or procedure. Your plastic surgeon will recommend a special diet that is right for you.



## CHAPTER 8

# Keep It Going:

### Ongoing Postop Care and Maintenance

#### **Surgery is just the beginning**

You're likely to hear your surgeon advise that the procedure is just the first step of your plastic surgery journey. Every plastic surgery procedure will have ongoing maintenance and care, including several postoperative visits with your surgeon and support team, especially over the first few months. However, the number, frequency and cadence of these appointments varies depending on the procedure and the plastic surgeon.

You've already done the hard part - paying for the surgery and breezing through the acute recovery phase - now's the time to protect and maximize your investment. Set yourself up to achieve the best result possible with your daily choices when it comes to diet, activity and recommended postop care.

Of course, a cheat meal here or there won't throw you totally off track, but more often than not, patients are better able to support their results by establishing healthy habits and routines.





## CHAPTER 9

# Common FAQs

### **What is the most common plastic surgery?**

According to the [ASPS Insights and Trends Report](#), the top five plastic surgery procedures in 2022 were liposuction, facelift, breast augmentation, tummy tuck and breast lift. Although these surgeries were the most popular, ASPS also saw regional spikes for some procedures.

### **How painful is plastic surgery?**

Pain tolerance will vary from patient to patient, and each procedure is quite different. Ask your surgeon how to best prepare for your postoperative pain so that you remain comfortable throughout the recovery process. This could include a combination of prescription and over-the-counter medications throughout the recovery.

For more intensive procedures, it is not uncommon for a surgeon to prescribe a few days' worth of a pain medication. However, most surgeons encourage their patients to manage their discomfort with over-the-counter pain medications from the start, and only use prescribed pain medication in a pinch as needed.

### **How long does it take to recover from plastic surgery?**

Recovery time depends upon the type of surgery performed as well as the way a patient spends their days at work. For example, someone who works at a desk with a computer all day could return quicker than someone who spends the day on their feet.

Be sure to ask your surgeon during your consultation how much time they recommend taking off from work. For example, it's not uncommon for breast augmentation patients to return to work in three or four days, but a more invasive procedure, such as a gluteal augmentation (aka BBL) or mommy makeover, may require you to be home and resting for several weeks.

"It depends" is a frustrating answer, but your estimated healing timeline truly does depend on the procedure you had. Ask your surgeon how to modify your daily activities, work and exercise schedule to accommodate your recovery timeline.

### **Are payment plans offered?**

Though some procedures provided by a plastic surgeon may be included under your health insurance, many are not. Your surgeon can provide payment plans and third-party services that can assist with the financing of plastic surgery.

Although there may be financing options to consider, most practices require payment in full prior to surgery day. Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon about your options during your consultation.

# CHAPTER 10

## What to Expect to Pay

Surgical fees vary greatly based on the procedure you are pursuing, your specific surgical needs and your geographic location. Although your surgeon's office may offer pricing on its website or over the phone, a surgical quote will be provided to you after your consultation process.

Remember that patient customization affects procedure costs - the exact price of a procedure will reflect a patient's specific needs and desired outcome. For instance, a patient receiving only twilight anesthesia will not have to cover an anesthesia provider's fee or the medication itself.

### What are you paying for?

Each surgeon will be different, but the final cost of your procedure typically includes the below expenses:

- Surgeon fees
- Material costs (i.e., breast implants, surgical garments or special medications)
- O.R. costs
- Anesthesia-related fees, including the medication itself and the anesthesiologist administering
- Follow-up appointments

Remember to ask your plastic surgeon's office about cost for emergency or revision surgeries, as these are likely not included in your initial fee.

### Remember, your body and your health are priceless.

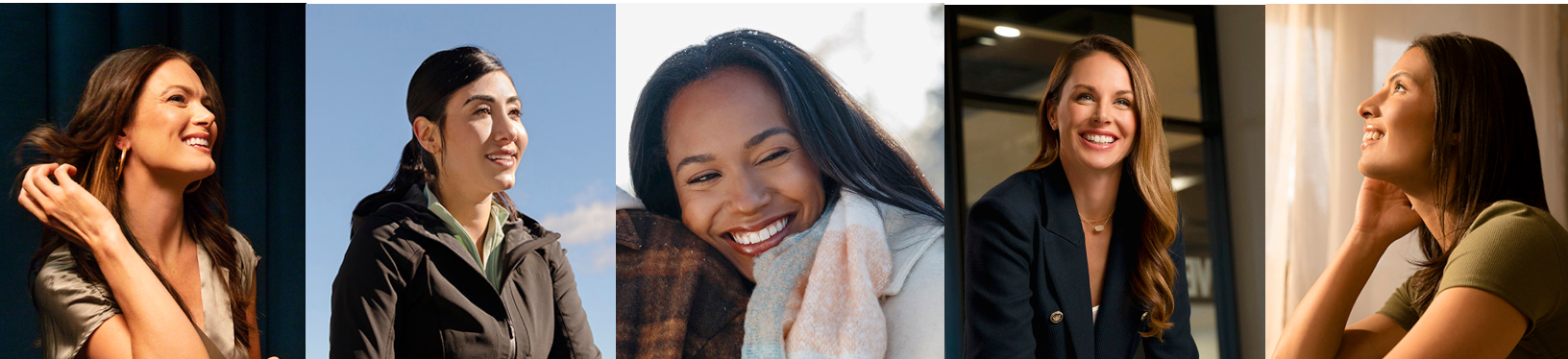
Undergoing plastic surgery is a life-altering event, and your highest priority should be to find the best plastic surgeon for your specific needs. Surgeon demand, along with their training, background and credentials, can increase cost, as can your geographic location - for example, surgery in New York City will likely cost more than in Cincinnati. Confirm with your plastic surgeon's office that their quoted cost includes the above expenses, at minimum.

This is absolutely not the time to hunt for a bargain. In fact, patients should be wary of physicians who offer pricing that is significantly lower than the national or regional average. If you find that the plastic surgeon of your dreams is slightly out of range, it's smart to wait a little longer and book with the surgeon you really like and trust, rather than go with your second choice, but there's no harm in asking the office what can be done in terms of a payment plan.



Congratulations on taking the first step on your plastic surgery journey. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons offers numerous resources and information for anyone interested in learning more about plastic surgery procedures and researching board-certified plastic surgeons.

And remember that when the time is right for plastic surgery, **Do It For You!**



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