

## Introduction To Cosmetic Surgery

Cosmetic surgery is not a sharply defined area. An operation of any kind should achieve a good cosmetic result, even an appendectomy or a back operation for a ruptured disc. Also, many cosmetic operations have a functional as well as cosmetic aspect, such as upper eyelid surgery to improve the field of vision, or breast size reduction to alleviate neck, back, or breast pain. By virtue of common usage, cosmetic surgery has become an acceptable term. There are some plastic surgeons, however, who prefer the term aesthetic surgery. Cosmetic is derived from the Greek word Kosmos, meaning order, beauty, or improving on beauty. Aesthetic is derived from the Greek word Aisthetikos, meaning to perceive by the senses, or pertaining to the senses of the beautiful. There is nothing new about the desire to look younger or more attractive. Improving self-image is an acceptable concept in today's health regime. Most American women discuss restorative surgery with their friends and family and they do not feel guilty about having such surgery performed. Of course, they do not usually advertise their operation and sometimes ask how they can camouflage the postoperative look so they can return to work as soon as possible. Many factors account for the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery. Contemporary culture in the United States is preoccupied with youthful appearance. Women who are threatened with the loss of a job because the look too old, may have cosmetic surgery for monetary reasons. Unfortunately, many employers value the look of blooming good health associated with youth rather than years of experience and a mature sense of responsibility. The "baby boomers" in the workplace are well aware of this. Now entering their fifties, this generation was the first to enjoy the many advantages of modern medicine. They enjoyed the protection of the polio vaccine and life-saving advantages of antibiotics. Fitness programs and better eating habits have contributed to their good health also. Another factor that accounts for the recent increase in cosmetic surgery is the publicity it has received in newspapers, women's magazines and the media. Prior to 1979, ethical plastic surgeons did not advertise. Then the Federal Trade Commission declared that this restriction created a monopoly, which was illegal. Now physicians, even those not trained in plastic surgery and advertise and they do. As a result, the number of people, particularly women, seeking cosmetic surgery has increased. So too, has the number of the qualified and unqualified practitioners. Only diplomates of the American Board of Plastic Surgery are recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialists as specialists in plastic surgery. They have been trained in general surgery and subsequently in plastic surgery and therefore are qualified to operate on the entire body. Other groups of physicians operate above the collar bone on the head and neck. Dermatological surgeons perform chemical peels, a popular way to defeat the skin's aging process. Who pays for cosmetic surgery? Being elective, it is usually paid for by the patient. Surgery to correct congenital deformities such as cleft lip and palate, deformities resulting from accidental injury and cancer deformities such as mastectomy may be covered by insurance. Some women forgo vacations and others spend practically no money on clothes for years so that they can save up for cosmetic surgery. Some borrow money; others sell a valuable piece of jewelry. Girls in their teens are sometimes given money to spend on a "nose job" for their 16th birthday.

## About the Author

Glacier descent, warning me of the crevasses hidden among the blankets of snow and boulders of ice that give the famed ski run its breathtaking.

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