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What You Should Know About the Safety of Plastic Surgery

When considering plastic surgery, it's natural to focus more on the expected result than on the surgical process. However, to be fully informed, it's important to learn about the safety of the procedure as well as the expected outcome. Although thousands of people have plastic surgery every year without complications, no surgical procedure is risk-free.

To maximize safety, ensure that:

- Your surgeon is adequately trained and is board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery; Any MD, can perform plastic surgery, however a doctor who is ABPS Board certified has 6 years of surgical training, specialized training in plastic surgery and is **required** to continuously update their knowledge and skills.
- The facility where your surgery will be performed conforms to strict safety standards established by the Joint Commission of Hospital Organizations or an equivalent accrediting body. Hospitals take up to a year preparing to pass this strict, on site inspection, geared to ensure patient safety.
- Your surgeon is informed of any drugs you are taking and your full medical history, especially if you have had any circulation disorders, heart or lung ailments or problems with blood clots;
- The surgical facility will use skilled, licensed personnel to administer and monitor your anesthesia and your recovery immediately following the procedure;
- Extra safety measures are taken if you are having a more extensive procedure. Consult with your Surgeon if you have any concerns. **How can I be sure that my surgeon has adequate training?**

Good credentials can't guarantee a successful outcome; however, they can significantly increase the likelihood of it. Patients are advised to find a doctor who is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS), the **only** board recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties to certify a surgeon in plastic surgery of the face and of the entire body. Certification by the ABPS is "the gold standard" for plastic surgeons because it signifies that the surgeon has had formal training in an accredited plastic surgery residency program. If your surgeon is ABPS-certified, you can be assured that your doctor:

- Has completed at least five years of surgical residency training after medical school, including at least two years in plastic surgery
- Has passed comprehensive cosmetic and reconstructive surgery exams • Is qualified to perform cosmetic *and* reconstructive procedures – everything from liposuction and facelifts to intricate wound repair.

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To verify a surgeon's certification status, contact the American Board of Plastic Surgery at 215- 587-9322 or visit the board's web site at www.abplsurg.org or the American Board of Medical Specialties at www.abms.org or by phoning 1-800-776-2378

Why is it so important for my plastic surgeon to know detailed information about my personal and family health history?

There is always risk with any surgical procedure. However, as a patient, you can play an important role in reducing your risk by providing a full and complete health history to your surgeon.

Although rare, one of the most serious complications associated with surgery is the development of blood clots in the large veins of the abdomen and legs. This complication can lead to a potentially fatal *pulmonary embolism* (blocked lung artery). Therefore, it is extremely important to tell your plastic surgeon if you or any of your family members have a history of blood clots or if you have had a family member who died *suddenly*, shortly after surgery or childbirth.

You will also be evaluated for other factors that may increase the risk of blood clots. These include:

- Being extremely overweight • Having recent traumatic injury • Any disorder of the heart, lungs or central nervous system • A history of cancer, recurrent severe infection or genetic problems that affect blood clotting

For women, additional risk factors include:

- Taking oral contraceptives or having recently ceased taking them • Undergoing hormone-replacement therapy

Safety measures to prevent blood clots will be determined by your individual degree of risk. If you are considered low risk, your doctor may simply ensure that you are positioned on the operating table in a way that allows for adequate blood circulation to the legs. If you are of moderate or high risk for developing blood clots, you may also be advised to wear elastic stockings before, during and after your procedure, or to take special anti-clotting medications. Compression devices on the legs may be used during surgery to support your normal circulation.

How can I be sure that the anesthesia care I receive in my plastic surgeon's surgical facility is adequate?

For maximum safety, ASPS recommends that:

- Any planned anesthesia should be administered by skilled, licensed personnel acting under the direction of an anesthesiologist or the operating surgeon.
- Before any type of anesthesia is used, the surgeon or anesthesiologist must take a full medical history. A physical examination and appropriate lab tests may also be performed. Your surgeon needs to know if you have any serious medical problems or have had previous adverse reaction to any other type of anesthesia. Also, you must let the anesthesiologist know about any medications you are taking (including herbal supplements), any known drug allergies, when you last ate and whether you smoke cigarettes or use alcohol or illegal drugs.
- You should be assured that you will receive individual monitoring by skilled, licensed personnel before, during and after the procedure. Staff who are familiar with the warning signs of cardiac or respiratory distress and are trained in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), should be on hand to monitor your procedure and recovery following your surgery.

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- If you are told that you will be kept overnight at the surgical facility while you recuperate, make sure that the facility is accredited by a recognized agency. In an accredited facility you will receive around-the-clock care and monitoring by two or more skilled and licensed staff members with at least one trained in ACLS.

Safety is a team effort

Quality patient care, safety and successful surgical outcomes are the result of the patient, the surgeon and the surgical staff working together. Your concerns about safety should be discussed in detail with your plastic surgeon. This will help promote a safe outpatient surgery experience as well as fulfilling your surgical expectations.

To schedule your free 15-minute phone consultation, and **get your questions answered** by a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon, just call our office at:

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