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INTERNET GUIDE TO COSMETIC SURGERY FOR WOMEN

M. SANDRA WOOD

Internet Guide to Cosmetic Surgery for Women

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Internet Guide to Cosmetic Surgery for Women

M. Sandra Wood

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Due to the ever-changing nature of the Internet, Web site names and addresses, though verified to the best of the publisher's ability, should not be accepted as accurate without independent verification.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AACD	American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry
AACS	American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery
AAD	American Academy of Dermatology
AAFPRS	American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
ABD	American Board of Dermatology
ABFPRS	American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
ABMS	American Board of Medical Specialists
ABO	American Board of Ophthalmology
ABOto	American Board of Otolaryngology
ABPS	American Board of Plastic Surgery
ABS	American Board of Surgery
ASAPS	American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery
ASDS	American Society for Dermatologic Surgery
ASOPRS	American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
ASPS	American Society of Plastic Surgeons
FAQ	frequently asked question
FPSN	Facial Plastic Surgery Network
HON	Health on the Net
html	hypertext markup language
http	hypertext transfer protocol
NLM	National Library of Medicine
NOAH	New York Online Access to Health
PDF	portable document format
URL	uniform resource locator

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SYMBOL KEY



Bulletin board



Chat room



Dentist locator



Discussion forum



Message board



Photo gallery



Physician locator



Support forum



Technician locator

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Introduction

I am the original candidate for an “extreme makeover”—the TV show might have been named after me. Tummy tuck, belt lipectomy, liposuction, thigh lipoplasty, breast lift, spider veins, hair replacement, eyelid surgery (both undereye bags and drooping eyelids), wrinkle removal, facial liposuction for double chin—I would be a candidate for all of these procedures, and believe me, have considered all of them over the years and especially while researching and compiling this book. Ah, if I just had the money!

My interest in cosmetic surgery began many years ago. As someone who was constantly battling weight, I’d considered cosmetic surgery, but knew that it was not a solution to my problem. However, fifteen years ago, following the birth of my son, my stomach did not go back to where it had been. Not that it was ever truly “flat”—but after two cesarean sections, the stomach muscles were pretty much gone, and I started thinking about having a tummy tuck. I even got to the point of discussing it with a cosmetic surgeon about ten years ago, following an injury to my forehead which required thirty-one stitches. At a follow-up evaluation to determine whether scar revision would be necessary (it wasn’t), I discussed both a tummy tuck and eyelid surgery with the cosmetic surgeon. To this day, I regret my decision not to have the surgery. I’m ten years older and have lost the time that I would have had feeling better about myself and also increased my surgical risk due to age. Also, time has done its damage—making additional procedures attractive.

I’m part of the baby-boomer generation and had children late in life; the latter has led to its embarrassing moments. I have been in a store where the clerk, talking to my son, referred to me as his grandmother. My son looked confused. However, it brought home the point to me that I’m not as young on the outside as I mentally feel on the inside. I want to think that being in my fifties is still young, and cosmetic surgery begins to sound more and more attractive.

It used to be that if you had cosmetic surgery, you didn’t talk about it. It was something that just happened (e.g., you went away on a vacation and came back looking very “rested”). Basically, times have changed over the

past ten years or so. Perhaps it's the fact that movie stars are talking openly about their cosmetic surgery. Or, possibly, it's because every week (sometimes every day), cosmetic surgery is the topic of a TV news or talk show. It's been the focus of several reality shows (*Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*), and an FX show, *Nip/Tuck*. Or, it may be that the baby-boomer generation, looking to find its youth again—into the “antiaging” frame of mind—has brought cosmetic surgery into the mainstream. Everyday people, not just movie stars, are talking about cosmetic procedures, from the new “in” procedure, Botox, to the immensely popular surgical procedures of liposuction and breast enlargement.

So, if you (like me) are among the hundreds of thousands of women considering cosmetic surgery, how do you decide what procedure you want done? How do you find out information about the procedures and treatments that are available and how they are performed? How do you locate a qualified physician? These are the types of questions that this book is intended to help you answer.

The growth of the Internet during the 1990s has opened up ready access to all types of information. It didn't take long before the health care world realized that this was an appropriate way to transmit health care information to patients and consumers—including information about plastic/cosmetic surgery. The amount of information available on the Internet about cosmetic surgery and various over-the-counter cosmetic therapies is absolutely mind-boggling. Information is available online from professional associations, the government, educational institutions, physicians advertising their private practices, companies selling their products, physician locator services, and more. There is so much to sort through, that it becomes difficult and time-consuming to decide which sites to access, let alone which sites are reputable. This book is intended to help you locate quality information about cosmetic surgery on the Internet, guiding you to sites where you can begin your search.

The book is organized into eleven chapters. The first four chapters provide basic information. Chapter 1 introduces plastic and cosmetic surgery, including some definitions, cosmetic surgery as a “hot” trend, and statistics on the number of women in the United States having cosmetic surgery. Chapter 2 covers some Internet basics (if you are a beginner with the Internet, you may want to consider purchasing a separate Internet guide). This chapter helps you to evaluate sites, covers basic searching of the Internet, and recommends two megasites for consumer health information. Deciding to have cosmetic surgery involves both the decision of what pro-

cedure you want and choosing a physician. Chapter 3 covers selecting a physician, including board certification and membership organizations (and their Web sites). Much of the quality information available online comes from societies that credential physicians, so it seemed logical to include these sites in a discussion about board certification and credentialing. Chapter 4 introduces you to basic sites that provide cosmetic surgery information; it is divided into Web sites of professional organization sites (plus one university site) and commercial sites.

In the next four chapters, cosmetic procedures have been divided into “logical groupings”—body contouring; cosmetic surgery of the breast, cosmetic surgery of the face, head, and neck; and cosmetic surgery of the skin. Procedures are listed alphabetically under their “common” name, and there are cross-references from the technical names, plus plenty of suggestions to guide you to other related procedures. You will find many of the same sites listed in all chapters, just under different cosmetic procedures.

These chapters are followed by chapters on Web sites for hair transplantation for women and on cosmetic dentistry. The final chapter lists selected Web sites for professional organizations outside the United States. Cosmetic surgery has been popular outside the United States for many years, and women have traveled worldwide to clinics specializing in particular procedures. These organizations provide information that might prove useful should you be considering cosmetic surgery in another country.

One final caution. These sites are intended as starting points for you to gather information about cosmetic surgery and to locate the physician who might perform your cosmetic procedure. Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to have surgery should be made between you and your physician, and you are encouraged to discuss details of the procedure with him or her. You are urged to check your physician’s credentials, including board certification and professional affiliations, and to evaluate previous work that he or she has done. Know the risks up front; make an informed decision.

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Chapter 1

Cosmetic Plastic Surgery—The Basics

Thinking about having a cosmetic surgery procedure done? Not sure whether you want to let friends and relatives know you are considering having that nose reshaped, the bags under your eyes removed, or that tummy tuck to remove the bulge that's been there since your last child was born? Not sure about what is involved in the procedure, where to find information, or what doctor to perform the procedure? Afraid even to ask about cosmetic surgery because you don't know enough yet to ask intelligent questions?

Well, this book is for you. A wealth of information is available via the Internet, and, it can be accessed anonymously. As cosmetic surgery becomes more mainstream, the Internet is rapidly gaining popularity as the first resource to turn to for information. You can gather all sorts of background information about cosmetic surgery procedures, identify potential doctors to perform the procedures, and even chat online with others who have had cosmetic surgery, all from the comfort of your own home. The problem is, in fact, that there is too much information about cosmetic surgery on the Internet, and not all of it is accurate. This book is intended to guide you to quality sources of information about cosmetic surgery, but only you and a qualified physician can eventually make the decision as to whether or not you should undergo a cosmetic surgery procedure.

WHAT IS PLASTIC SURGERY?

Plastic surgery is the medical specialty involved with changing a person's appearance via surgery. Although people tend to think of plastic surgery in terms of its cosmetic use, in reality, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the majority of surgeries are reconstructive in nature. Cosmetic surgery is generally defined as surgery done for the purpose of improving appearance, i.e., it is plastic surgery for aesthetic pur-

poses, while reconstructive surgery is done to correct or repair a defect, for example to correct a birth defect or repair an injury. The same procedure may be used either cosmetically or for reconstruction, and frequently the purpose of the surgery determines whether it is covered by health insurance. Most cosmetic procedures are not covered by insurance, although it's always good to check with your health insurance company.

Readers should keep in mind, however, that a procedure may be used either for cosmetic or reconstructive purposes, so this book will also be valuable for readers who need reconstructive surgery.

COSMETIC SURGERY IS A HOT TREND

Despite its cost, the days when cosmetic plastic surgery was limited to movie stars or the very rich and famous are long gone. Cosmetic surgery has boomed over the past decade or two, and several factors have contributed to this amazing increase in popularity. In recent years, people have become more open about having cosmetic surgery—it has become the “in” thing to do. Perhaps it's the aging baby-boomer set that doesn't want to admit it is aging; or, perhaps it's the increasing number of movie stars admitting—actually, being very open about the fact—that they have had cosmetic plastic surgery. The topic of cosmetic plastic surgery is much more out in the open than ever before. People that might not have considered cosmetic surgery several years ago are increasingly deciding to “go under the knife.”

Cosmetic Surgery and Celebrities

The Internet is loaded with sites that discuss cosmetic surgery procedures of celebrities. Several sites list the stars, what procedure was done, and before and after pictures.^{1,2} Included are, to name only a few, Pamela Anderson, Drew Barrymore, Cher, Heather Locklear, Madonna, Demi Moore, Anna Nicole Smith, Sharon Stone, and Raquel Welch. The search engine Yahoo! even has a “Celebrity Plastic Surgery” category among its directories.³

In fact, several sources go so far as to say that virtually everyone in Hollywood has had cosmetic surgery of some form or another. Although some are still reluctant to admit that they've had surgery, the fact is that in Tinseltown, looks are everything, and since age eventually takes its toll,

cosmetic surgery, from laser peels through liposuction, ultimately wins out.⁴

In recent years, however, as more TV and movie stars have begun talking about their cosmetic procedures, “ordinary,” everyday people are opening up about their experiences. Almost all of the daytime talk shows have explored the topic, it is constantly mentioned on syndicated TV shows such as *Entertainment Tonight (ET)* and *Extra*, and it’s been discussed on many primetime news shows and on ABC’s *Good Morning America*.⁵ In spring 2003, ABC TV introduced *Extreme Makeover* into its nighttime lineup of shows after the success of a pilot program in late 2002. This show takes ordinary people and offers them a free cosmetic surgery makeover; application forms for people wanting to participate in this program can be found on <<http://www.abcnews.com>>. Other networks are also offering shows about cosmetic surgery, including FX’s *Nip/Tuck*, a drama based on the life of a single, eligible plastic surgeon; FOX network’s *The Swan*, where women undergo cosmetic surgery and then compete in a beauty contest; and MTV’s *I Want a Famous Face*, where patients undergo cosmetic surgery to look like a celebrity. Although these TV shows have popularized cosmetic surgery, many of the professional medical associations are concerned that they are unrealistic and do not disclose enough about the risks of surgery. Programs such as *60 Minutes* and *20/20* have aired “exposés” about the risks of cosmetic surgery and the need to carefully select your surgeon.

Baby-Boomer Generation

As the generation of baby boomers has aged, health and physical fitness have become priorities. Women (and men) want to look and feel good about themselves. Cosmetic surgery is one way to keep a youthful appearance, whether it’s used to erase those wrinkles and lines that appear with age, or to reshape one’s body when exercise alone won’t do the job.

Recent reports from the Centers for Disease Control indicate that obesity in America has become a major health concern. Interestingly, the increase in gastric bypass surgery (stomach stapling), a treatment for morbid obesity, has helped promote cosmetic surgical procedures. The major weight loss from stomach stapling can result in the need for cosmetic surgery to tighten up the body and remove excess skin.

More and more younger adults, even teens, are choosing to have plastic surgery as a means of correcting what they view as “defects.” The prevail-

ing attitude is, “if you don’t like it, fix it.” In the heavy-duty world of corporate America, appearance is everything. The confidence gained as a result of cosmetic surgery might make the difference between being hired or not, between getting that promotion or not.

WHAT ARE THE NUMBERS?

How many people have cosmetic surgery each year? What are the most frequent procedures, and do women have certain procedures more frequently than men? Is age a consideration in cosmetic surgery? How much does it cost? These are all questions that come to mind when one is considering cosmetic surgery. After all, it is comforting to know that others have had the same cosmetic procedure that you are considering. Having some realistic expectation of both costs and results will help you to make your decision.

Answers to all of these questions, and more, can be found on the Internet. Perhaps the best source of statistics on cosmetic surgery is available on the Web site of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) <<http://www.plasticsurgery.org>> (*note: this is the form that will be used in this book for locations on the Internet; you will learn more about Internet addresses—URLs—in the next chapter*). Statistics are available on this site by year (currently, 1992, 1996, and 1996 to 2003); by type of procedure; and by age, sex, and ethnicity. Also given are national average physician fees for cosmetic procedures (it’s interesting to compare 1992 versus 2003 average fees). These numbers are for procedures reported by “ASPS member plastic surgeons certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery.”⁶

The ASPS site includes many quick facts about cosmetic and reconstructive surgical and nonsurgical procedures. Press releases on the ASPS site for 2003 indicate that over 8.7 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in 2003, up 32 percent from over 6.5 million procedures in 2002. The top five surgical procedures were nose reshaping, liposuction, breast enlargement, eyelid surgery, and facelifts.

Looking only at cosmetic surgery procedures for women, it’s interesting to note that the top five female cosmetic procedures in 2003, according to the ASPS, were liposuction (287,930), breast enlargement (254,140), nose reshaping (226,780), eyelid surgery (200,324), and facelifts (115,908). Overall, women accounted for 1,469,265 cosmetic surgeries, or 82 percent of the total cosmetic surgical patients.