

by Blythe Thimsen

Plastic Surgery is HOT!

Statistically speaking, Americans are not afraid to go under the knife for a little nip, tuck or general sprucing up. According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, in 2010, women had almost 8.6 million cosmetic procedures, a number that has increased 164 percent from 1997. Men are joining the trend, with over 750,000 cosmetic procedures in 2010, which is an 88 percent increase from 1997.

Try as we may to be accepting of the fine lines, gentle sagging and an occasional scar, more often than not, if the truth be told, we want to look fabulous. But at what cost? As the cosmetic beauty industry grows and there are increased options for surgeries and procedures, there are also increased options as to the places and people performing them, not all of which are qualified. While a licensed doctor can legally perform surgery, plastic surgery may not be in their scope of expertise, which can put patients at risk.

In order to educate patients and ensure they know the risks they are taking by choosing unqualified professionals or groups to perform their plastic or cosmetic surgery, a group of eleven local members of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) have formed a cooperative. Their goal over the next three months is to educate patients in Spokane about the risks of selecting unqualified physicians and unaccredited facilities for a procedure.

“Anyone who has a medical license can legally do whatever procedures they want in their own

A Question

of Beauty

office; it’s perfectly legal but not necessarily ethical,” says Dr. Carol Hathaway, a board certified plastic surgeon, and a member of the local cooperative. “People don’t think of plastic surgery as real surgery, but it is. Complications can occur in any surgical procedure, and its important how you manage it. A couple of weekend courses isn’t comparable to being board certified.”

For some people, plastic surgery is a choice in order to enhance or improve their overall look, while other instances call for surgery to correct a medical condition. Whether for aesthetics or medical needs, it is essential that you select a qualified surgeon, specifically finding one who is board certified in plastic surgery. Think all doctors who do cosmetic surgery are board certified? Guess again. Many patients unknowingly have procedures performed by unqualified physicians in non-accredited facilities. How does this happen? According to a statement from the eleven local

ASPS members, “Medical authorities, such as state licensing boards, do not monitor or restrict specialty practice, so any licensed physician is legally allowed to practice plastic surgery or any other medical specialty regardless of his or her training or experience level.”

Board certified plastic surgeons have at least six years of surgical training, have passed rigorous testing and operate only in accredited medical facilities. Taking the time to find a qualified surgeon and facility will help you rest assured you have taken the necessary steps to protect your health and well being.

Once you have found the right surgeon, don’t stop there. This is the time to ask a few essential questions before your procedure. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons’ website, you should ask the following questions of your plastic surgeon before a proceeding with a procedure:

- Are you certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery?
- Are you a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons?
- Were you trained specifically in the field of plastic surgery?
- How many years of plastic surgery training have you had?
- Do you have hospital privileges to perform this procedure? If so, at which hospitals?
- Is the office-based surgical facility accredited by a nationally- or state-recognized accrediting agency, or is it state-licensed or Medicare-certified?
- How many procedures of this type have you performed?
- Am I a good candidate for this procedure?
- Where and how will you perform my procedure?
- How long of a recovery period can I expect, and what kind of help will I need during my recovery?
- What are the risks and complications associated with my procedure?
- How are complications handled?

It’s not just plastic surgery that should have you pause and ask some questions. Whether you are undergoing a surgery or indulging in a lighter form of pampering, don’t be shy to ask questions before you dig in. Here are some things to consider when it comes to pampering yourself.

MASSAGE

With all of our tense shoulders and knot-filled backs, it is no wonder massages are one of the most popular services at spas. Before you settle in for a massage, consider the following:

- What type of massage is right for you? There are over 160 types of massage, though most spas offer the basics, from a light relaxing massage, to a deep tissue massage. Ask the masseuse what type is best for your needs. Also, don’t be afraid to request they provide lighter or heavier pressure; they want you to feel the benefits of the massage.

MANICURES AND PEDICURES

Fabulous looking hands and feet are well worth the cost of a manicure and pedicure, but are they worth the risk of an infection? According to the American Academy of Dermatology, manicure and pedicure health risks include fungal infections, and bacterial skin infections. Some simple steps can help you avoid these problems. Consider the following:

- Make sure your salon and technician are licensed.
- Ask how and when stations and tools are sanitized.
- Ask if they will they allow you to bring your own tools, such as nail clippers and skin buffers.

- Try skipping the cuticle trim. Trimming cuticles is one way nail infections can be increased, and skipping it will not ruin your manicure or pedicure.

HAIR

Long hair, short hair, the perfect color, sun-kissed highlights, full bouncy curls or smooth straight locks – we seem to want it all when it comes to our hair. Luckily, with the help of your hair care professional, it is possible to achieve *almost* any look. With all of the chemicals that go into these transformations, though, it can take a toll on your tresses. There are healthy ways to manage your mop, and a few questions with your stylist will help you be on the right track:

- When it comes to hair straightening products and procedures, formaldehyde, one of the most common chemicals used to straighten hair, has been getting a bad rap. Ask your stylist if there is a different product you can use.
- Ask when and with what to wash. Washing hair everyday can dry it out, yet for some the thought of not getting their daily hair suds is a dud. Find out if your hair needs a daily wash, or will benefit from longer stretches between washes. If so, you may be able to save time, as well as money.

PERMANENT MAKEUP

Oh to wake up looking like they do in the movies, with makeup in place, ready to face the day! Can you imagine? With permanent makeup, it is not such a far-fetched notion. An increasing number of women are turning to permanent makeup as a way to reduce their morning routine, and to ensure they always look fresh-faced. If you are considering this procedure:

- Ask your medical professional if there is any reason you would not be a candidate for this procedure.
- Ask the facility where you will get the procedure for references from previous clients.
- Ask if there are any side effects or complications you should anticipate.

TANNING

A golden glow is one of the most coveted looks, especially during the summer, but we all know the sun can do more damage than good for our skin. It is difficult to make it through the week without hearing of a new study showing the damage and risk of basking in the sun. So what is one to do when they need a golden glow to keep them going, but a trip to the tanning bed has been ruled as dangerous as a day at the beach? Spray baby, spray! Spray tans continue to be a popular choice. Before going into the mist, consider:

- Ask if you can sample a color on an indiscreet part of your body, before committing to a full spray in that shade.
- Ask how quickly it dries, and if you should avoid anything, like a chlorinated pool, or even a shower. You don’t want to pay, only to leave your tan in the pool or on the floor of the shower.
- How long the tan will last? If you will be traveling and can’t come in for second spray, ask if there is a lotion in the same shade you can take with you, in order to maintain your tan for your entire travels.

Don’t be afraid to gather information and ask questions before you indulge in any form of pampering, whether it is a major surgery or a simple update to your beauty routine. Knowledge is power, especially when it is a question of beauty. **LS**