



*owning my*  
**Journey**

THE CARE  
**YOU**  
DESERVE

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
PLASTIC SURGEONS®

***Disclaimer***

This brochure (e-book) is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to provide medical advice, diagnose any condition or recommend a specific treatment. The information here should not replace the advice of a qualified plastic surgeon. Choosing a plastic surgeon is a personal decision, and results can vary from person to person. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) does not guarantee any specific outcomes or results. Always consult with a board-certified plastic surgeon to discuss your goals and make informed decisions.

# Greetings!

Plastic surgery is often referred to as a journey, and for good reason. From the initial decision to explore your options to booking a consultation, having surgery, going through recovery, removing the bandages and beyond, plastic surgery is a process. It is a journey that can feel both exciting and overwhelming, and as you navigate this personal path, it is natural to have many questions.

Patients who choose to undergo plastic surgery of any kind and for any reason need support. This booklet is a resource that can help guide you through the process, offer thoughtful commentary and provide tips and resources to make the most of your plastic surgery odyssey.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) wants to help you by providing information designed to spur ideas, get you comfortable asking questions and help you make informed decisions about your care and recovery. There is a lot of information on social platforms and the internet about plastic surgery. Some of it is useful, and some is simply wrong. Getting the most out of your plastic surgery experience starts by educating yourself as a patient and feeling empowered to take control of your aesthetic health through informed decision -making.

In the pages of this guide, you will find a comprehensive handbook meant to take the guesswork out of plastic surgery. This is your one-stop shop for everything you wanted to know about plastic surgery but might be afraid to ask – afraid to ask your doctor or maybe even afraid to ask yourself. The information in this guide will make you more confident about your plastic surgery choices and help you achieve the outcome and experience you're looking for.

Are you ready to explore your plastic surgery options? Every journey starts with one small step forward. That step can be easier when you have the support and guidance of a trusted companion. Let's take that first step together.

***Let's take that first step together.***

## CHAPTER ONE

# Asking Yourself “Why Plastic Surgery?”

If you are considering plastic surgery, you are in good company. Although the post-pandemic plastic surgery boom may have settled, the world of plastic surgery has more interest than ever before. Recent data from the [2023 ASPS Procedural Statistics Report](#) show that despite ongoing economic uncertainty, people are still interested in prioritizing plastic surgery. In 2023, there was a 5 percent rise in plastic surgery procedures and a 7 percent increase in minimally invasive procedures compared to the previous year. Nearly 1.6 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in 2023, and the number is only expected to grow in the years to come.

At the outset, most people don't think about the decision to undergo plastic surgery as a monumental or soul-searching moment. Yet, maybe it should be. Plastic surgery has a certain transformative power. It can refresh and reshape a person, changing appearance, attitude and, yes, even improve mental health and self-esteem. Whether you are thinking about touching up some fine lines with neuromodulators or are looking for a more lasting change via surgery, the best place to start navigating your plastic journey is with yourself.

Take the time to ask yourself what you want to change and why you want to change it. What is your motivation for taking this transformative journey? This is not a trick question. It is an exercise to get you thinking about why this is important to you – why it matters. One person's reason for wanting surgery is not superior to another. The point of this exercise is to ensure that you are going into plastic surgery with both eyes open and are doing it for the right reasons – to look and feel better for *yourself*.

Chasing someone else's aesthetic goals, desiring to look like a celebrity or undergoing a procedure because it's trending on social media is the fastest way to set yourself up for a disappointing outcome. That's not to say a plastic surgeon will not strive to give you a great result. It's just that your “Why” and your expectations may not align with what's realistic.

Start with a bit of self-reflection. Ask yourself some challenging questions and be honest with your answers. Thinking about your motivations, goals and expectations is the first step to uncovering a fabulous new you. Take the time to write out answers to a few vital questions. Set them aside for a few days and then come back and review what you wrote. How does it make you feel? Do you have a better idea of why you want to move forward with plastic surgery?

If you feel confident this is the best path forward, congratulations! You are ready to find an ASPS Member Surgeon!

## CHAPTER TWO

# Finding a Plastic Surgeon

The journey to move forward with plastic surgery involves a series of decisions leading to the final outcome. One of the most vital is choosing the best surgical partner for you. That means you need to do some homework. Although this step may be the most time-consuming, taking the time to vet physicians and find the one that can best help you achieve your desired aesthetic goals is crucial.

Finding a plastic surgeon is about more than doing a cursory internet search. It takes time, patience and dedication. It is about knowing where to look for the best information possible. No one likes homework, but you want to ensure that you are working with a qualified plastic surgeon who really understands your needs when it comes to your health, safety and overall results.

### *Where Do You Start?*

A quick internet search for plastic surgeons in your area is one way to begin your search. However, narrowing down and researching a lengthy list of physicians can feel overwhelming. There are more focused search tools available from other sources, including ASPS. The ASPS [“Find a Surgeon”](#) tool allows you to search for ASPS Members in your area. Membership in ASPS for U.S. practicing physicians requires that the individual be highly trained in plastic surgery, have an unrestricted license to practice medicine and have obtained certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS).

Even when using search tools from a trusted source like ASPS, you should still independently verify the information about any providers you may be considering, including their current license and certification status. Most state medical boards (which license physicians) have a public-facing search tool that allows you to search for the provider(s) you identified by name and confirm the status of their medical license, among other information. ABPS similarly has a search tool to confirm the status of your provider(s) certification.

Results from broader internet searches or other search tools may include providers in your area who are not board certified by ABPS and may have no board certification or may be certified by other organizations. For nonsurgical procedures, this may even include dental providers or non-physician healthcare practitioners. So, what makes an ABPS certification distinctive, and why should it matter to you?

ABPS certifies surgeons based on specific criteria. It is one of only 24 medical subspecialty boards recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) – and reviews a surgeon's education, experience, credentials, background and operative record, among other things. Only surgeons who completed an accredited residency program in plastic surgery are eligible to be certified by ABPS. If you are investing in plastic surgery, be sure your surgeon is qualified with knowledge, experience and credentials.

### *Selecting a Plastic Surgeon*

Once you find surgeons in your area with the right mix of education, experience and credentials, it is time to narrow the field. Visit their practice websites and social media pages to get a feel for the types of surgeries they offer and view before-and-after photographs of their patients. While you're at it, read online reviews and testimonials from former patients. You can gather a lot of information this way, not just about patient results but also about the surgeon's personality and aesthetic style. Plastic surgery is not just a science, it is an art. You want to work with a surgeon whose style and approach match the outcome you are looking for.

Remember, the internet and social media platforms are excellent sources of information, but they can also be misleading. It may be the digital age, but word of mouth is still one of the best forms of advertising. If you have family or friends who have visited a plastic surgeon, ask them about their experience – the good and the bad. Consider all the information you have gathered from your research, choose two or three board-certified plastic surgeons who would be a good fit and, when you're ready, schedule those consultations!



## *The meaning behind the letters*

Simply put, plastic surgeons may have a variety of letters after their names that indicate their education, training and certifications. The "MD" indicating Doctor of Medicine is certainly the most common, but in case you're curious about others, here are some common suffixes you might see in the ASPS Find a Surgeon tool:

**DO:** Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine

**FAAP:** Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics

**FACS:** Fellow of the American College of Surgeons

**FRCS:** Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons

**MBA:** Master of Business Administration

**MBChB:** Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery

**MD:** Doctor of Medicine

**MHS:** Master of Health Science

**MPH:** Master of Public Health

**PhD:** Doctor of Philosophy

## CHAPTER THREE

# Preparing for Your Consultation

One of the most important appointments you will make when considering surgery is your initial consultation with a board-certified plastic surgeon. Preparing for your first appointment can feel exciting, overwhelming and intimidating. You will have a million things running through your mind and it can be easy to forget the key points you want to bring up with the surgeon and the questions you want to ask. Preparation is key and will help you maximize your initial appointment.

### *What Is a Plastic Surgery Consultation?*

A plastic surgery consultation is an initial appointment with a plastic surgeon to discuss your aesthetic goals, plastic surgery options and medical history. It's an interview. You can learn more about the procedures that interest you, ask questions and explore the benefits and risks of plastic surgery in a judgment-free and confidential environment. Similarly, your plastic surgeon can learn more about you, your medical history, and your goals and expectations for plastic surgery.

The consultation is not just all talk. If you are interested in body procedures, expect to be asked to disrobe. An experienced plastic surgeon must examine you, take measurements, and understand your unique anatomy. This examination is the part of the appointment that many people find intimidating and may not be prepared for. A doctor can't find and fix a broken bone if he or she can't view the problem. The same is true for plastic surgeons. They can't assess your situation and help you learn more about your options without a careful examination. Some surgeons may also ask to take pictures of your body to include in your chart.

You should also expect to be asked some tough questions about your medical history, any current or former drug use and your mental health. These may seem like uncomfortable topics, but being truthful is critical because it helps your surgeon determine whether you

are an appropriate candidate for specific procedures. It is about delivering the best care as safely as possible.

Now is not the time to be shy. Your plastic surgery team wants to help you make the most of your appointment and ensure you know the risks and benefits of the surgery you are considering.

### ***One and Done?***

Should you attend one consultation and call it a day? Not necessarily. It is best to arrange consultations with two or three board-certified plastic surgeons. You want to find a surgeon with whom you feel comfortable, who cares about your needs and goals and whose aesthetic style matches the outcome you want. You may find you “gel” better with one surgeon over another. That’s okay! If you have done your research, arrange consultations with your top two or three surgeons to see where you feel most comfortable.

### ***How Much Does a Consultation Cost?***

How much can you expect to pay out of pocket for a consultation with a plastic surgeon? The answer depends on the surgeon. Some plastic surgeons offer free initial consultations to patients considering plastic surgery. However, time is valuable, and that may not always be the case depending on numerous factors, like the surgeon’s skill level, how busy their office is and the area where you live.

Presently, many surgeons charge a consultation or booking fee, which varies depending on the surgeon. The fee is often applied toward the cost of the procedure. When you call to request an initial consultation, ask what the office charges for the consultation and if that fee gets applied to the cost of the procedure if you follow through. A reputable plastic surgeon’s office should be transparent about all fees and costs associated with your consultation. Do not be afraid to ask about the cost when you call to make an appointment.

Do not let a consultation fee dissuade you from making multiple appointments. Plastic surgery is an investment in your appearance and well-being. Be prepared to spend a little money upfront to ensure you get the best information and care possible.

## *Preparing for Your First Visit*

You can maximize your initial plastic surgery consultation by taking proactive steps before your appointment. Get ready for your visit by:

- ▷ ***Preparing your medical history*** – You should have information about your medical history, family medical history, previous surgeries, allergies and a list of current medications.
- ▷ ***Dress for success*** – Dress comfortably for your appointment. You will often be asked to disrobe, so do not wear cumbersome or uncomfortable clothing.
- ▷ ***Bring questions*** – It can be challenging to think of things you want to talk about in the heat of the moment. Prepare a list of questions beforehand and take them with you. The last thing you want to do is pay for a consultation and then forget to ask an important question.
- ▷ ***Show up prepared*** – Complete the following worksheet to help you keep track of vital information to help you make your plastic surgery decision.
- ▷ ***Show of support*** - Often it can be helpful to have a spouse or close friend join in the consult particularly if they will be involved in your surgical journey.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Preparing for Surgery

Congratulations! You've done your research and chosen an ASPS Member Surgeon. Now, you are ready to embark fully on your plastic surgery journey. You may think the hard work is over, but the process is just beginning. After your consultation, you should understand more about the procedure, how to prepare for surgery, what it looks like and the steps you need to take to maximize your recovery.

In the days and weeks ahead of your planned procedure, you'll need to take the time to prepare your body. Your plastic surgeon will usually provide information outlining what diet, exercise and lifestyle modifications you need to make before surgery. These are not "recommendations." These are guidelines your plastic surgeon needs you to follow to prepare you for surgery, protect your safety and give you the best opportunity to achieve a successful outcome.

### *How to Prepare for Your Upcoming Plastic Surgery*

Step one is to always follow the guidance of your plastic surgeon. They have the knowledge and experience to guide you through the plastic surgery process and know what it takes to prepare you for what's to come. Other considerations you should think about to help prepare yourself and your loved ones for your upcoming plastic surgery journey include:

- ▷ **Modify your diet** – Your body needs the right combination of vitamins and minerals to thrive. It is also going to need proper nutrition to help it heal post-surgery. Start adjusting your diet four to six weeks before surgery. Try to avoid unhealthy or ultra-processed foods, which contain lots of sodium. Sodium increases postoperative swelling and potentially increases the risk of adverse outcomes. Drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated and boost your intake of fruits and vegetables. Getting plenty of fiber, omega-3 fatty acids and lean protein into your diet can help you achieve the best result by encouraging good blood circulation and minimizing inflammation.

- ▷ **Stop smoking and drinking alcohol** – Smoking significantly increases the risk of complications and can negatively impact the outcome of surgery. It impairs wound healing, increases the risk of infections and contributes to life-threatening medical conditions such as pulmonary embolism and thrombosis. Being a smoker may limit your plastic surgery options, so it is best to quit smoking and vaping before considering plastic surgery – that includes smoking and vaping tobacco and products containing THC. You should also avoid alcohol consumption because alcohol can thin the blood, cause excessive inflammation and impair wound healing.
- ▷ **Stop taking certain medications** - Your plastic surgeon may recommend that you stop taking certain medications before surgery. Blood thinners, heart medications, weight loss medicines (such as semaglutides) and other drugs may interfere with anesthesia and create dangerous medical complications. Follow your plastic surgeon’s recommendations and ensure that you stop taking specific medications when asked. Most physicians recommend that patients stop taking semaglutide drugs at least two weeks before surgery.
- ▷ **Create a recovery plan** – Take the time to create a surgery and recovery plan. Pregnant women are often advised to make a “baby plan” and pack a hospital bag before delivery. That’s the idea behind a recovery plan – to put in the work ahead of time so that you are prepared on the day of surgery and don’t have to stress about last-minute details.

A detailed plan should include:

- Confirming who will be escorting you home after surgery.
- Have your time off pre-approved by your employer.
- Ensuring you have family and friends available to help you with household duties, childcare and/or pet care during recovery.
- Plan where you will recover, at home or a family member or friend’s house.
- Stocking your home base with healthy foods, snacks and drinks.
- Ask your plastic surgeon if you can get the necessary prescriptions ahead of time so you can fill them before surgery.
- If your procedure requires you to stay at the hospital or surgical center overnight, pack a small bag with a change of clothes or pajamas and toiletries.

- ▷ **Go shopping ahead of time** – It's a good idea to shop for healthy food, drinks and snacks ahead of time so you don't have to worry about cooking, but it also helps to shop for postop supplies before surgery. Ask your plastic surgeon what they recommend you keep on hand, such as sterile gauze, bandages, silicone scar sheets, anti-bacterial ointment and other supplies. Purchase these and any medications you may need ahead of time.
- ▷ **Set up a recovery nook** – Where do you feel most comfortable? That's where you want to set up your own cozy recovery area. Prepare a comfortable spot that gives you access to the things you need, like an easy-to-reach table where you can put snacks, drinks and your medication. Keep a book, your phone and charger, the TV remote or a gaming system close by so you don't have to search for entertainment. Finally, make sure you have easy access to the restroom. Set up a stool, bench or non-slip pads in the shower or tub to protect yourself from slips and falls, and keep bags or other supplies nearby to keep your wound from getting wet, if necessary.
- ▷ **Take time to read** – It may feel like you've been doing so much reading that you are cramming for a test. From researching your procedure to finding your plastic surgeon, what could possibly be next? Now is the time to sit and read all the material your plastic surgeon has provided, including pre-surgery instructions, postop wound care, do's and don'ts and consent forms. Please read through this material carefully and make sure you understand it. If you have questions, always contact your plastic surgeon's office.
- ▷ **Get in the right frame of mind** – Most people know they need to prepare physically for surgery. However, did you know that it helps to prepare mentally as well? Surgery can take a toll on a person's emotional well-being. Give yourself some grace and take time to relax and unwind from the stress and anxiety of preparing for surgery. Talk to family or friends, journal and/or engage in activities that help you develop a positive mindset.
- ▷ **Splurge a little** – Now may be the right time to splurge a little. Treat yourself to some new and comfortable recovery pajamas, a plush bathrobe or a new book. Make a list of all the shows or movies you've been aching to see but haven't had the time to watch. You have taken a lot of steps to make it this far, so treat yourself to a few creature comforts.

WOMENING  
MAY  
Loving  
Free

The text is surrounded by decorative line art elements. A large, stylized leaf is positioned to the left of the word 'Loving'. A small, multi-petaled flower is located to the right of the word 'WOMENING'. The word 'Loving' is written in a cursive font with a heart-shaped dot above the letter 'i'. The word 'Free' is written in a bold, rounded font with a large, curved flourish at the end.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Surgery

The day of your surgery is here, and you are probably feeling some mixed emotions, from anxiety to excitement. Surgery day looks a bit different for everyone, depending on the procedure. However, a few elements remain the same regardless of your plastic surgeon or procedure.

### *Before You Leave Home*

- ▷ A few days before surgery, re-review your doctor's instructions. You may be required to stop taking specific medications or alter your diet if you are undergoing a procedure that requires anesthesia. Follow your plastic surgeon's instructions to ensure you are ready for surgery.
- ▷ Before surgery, double-check your finances. Some surgery centers or offices may require a partial payment upfront, and some may bill you later. Understand your immediate financial obligations so you are ready to make a payment, if required, when you get to the office on surgery day.
- ▷ Wear comfortable clothing to your appointment. If you are having a breast or body procedure that may limit mobility, opt for button-down shirts and loose clothing so you don't have to raise and lower your arms, which may be difficult or painful after surgery. Pants with an elastic or adjustable waistband are also an excellent choice, as are shoes you can slip on and off. If you feel cold, bring something warm, like a zip-up hoodie or cozy wrap, that you can easily put on and take off when needed.
- ▷ You'll also want to ensure that you remove all jewelry and leave it at home. Follow any hygiene procedures outlined by your doctor, such as washing your face with antibacterial soap and avoiding beauty products, deodorant, antiperspirant or other products.
- ▷ If you have trouble remembering everything in the hustle and bustle of preparing for surgery, you may find it helpful to keep a packed bag with your signed paperwork, medications and additional clothing by the door. When it is time to go, everything is right there waiting for you!

## *Arrival at the Surgery Center or Hospital*

- ▷ **Show up early** – Be prepared to arrive early. You may be required to review and sign additional documents and paperwork prior to surgery.
- ▷ **Meeting your care team** – After check-in, you typically meet your surgical care team, including your plastic surgeon and anesthesiologist or anesthesia provider. You may also be asked several questions about your health, diet and medications or drugs you take. Answer all questions honestly. Your surgical team is not judging your habits – they want to ensure proper anesthesia and medical care during your procedure. Now is also the time to ask any last-minute questions you might have about your surgery and what to expect.
- ▷ **Preparing for surgery** – Once the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed, you will be prepared for surgery. Again, this process looks different depending on the procedure, but you'll generally be asked to disrobe and put on a surgical smock or gown. Your plastic surgeon may make surgical markings on your body to outline where he or she will make incisions. You may also be provided compression garments, like socks. Your plastic surgeon may also request tests, like blood work, to verify you are healthy and ready for surgery.
- ▷ **Final preparations** – Before surgery, you may meet the rest of your care team, including nurses and assistants. You may also be asked to wear pneumatic compression boots to enhance blood flow and circulation during surgery, which is more common for prolonged surgical procedures.

## *During Surgery*

Surgical practices differ depending on the plastic surgeon, facility and procedure. When you arrive, the operating room may be chilly, which is normal. After being placed on the operating room bed, your anesthesiologist or anesthesia provider begins preparations for anesthesia. You will drift into what feels like a deep sleep. Anesthesia medications induce a state of unconsciousness, temporary loss of sensation and temporary loss of motion. Although anesthesia helps prevent you from moving while your plastic surgeon operates, you will also be gently secured for your safety. Your body will be prepared for surgery using sterile techniques.

Your plastic surgeon will perform the procedure as described, barring unforeseen complications. Your care team will monitor your vital signs throughout the process.

## ***Post-Surgery Recovery***

- ▷ ***Immediately postop*** – When you come out of anesthesia following your surgery, you will generally find yourself in a recovery room. The medications used during surgery can make you feel groggy, confused and lightheaded. A nurse or member of your care team will look in on you to make sure you are doing okay and may encourage you to eat or drink a little.
- ▷ ***During recovery*** – Depending on the surgery, you may spend some time in a recovery room adjusting. Your team continues to monitor you during this time, and when you meet specific criteria, your team can approve your discharge. Staff must file paperwork and then you can leave with your designated caretaker.
- ▷ ***Getting home*** – You should set up transportation home with a family member, friend or hired medical assistant. This person might also be the person helping you in the first few days after surgery. It's important to remember that you cannot drive home after general anesthesia and significant surgery. Ridesharing services are also not the way to go because you don't want to be driven home by a stranger while you are in a vulnerable state.
- ▷ ***Follow postop instructions*** – Explicitly follow all your provider's postop instructions. Take all medications as prescribed and follow proper wound care treatment techniques. Consider setting an alarm on your phone so you remember to take your medication or change your surgical dressings. Ask a friend or family member for help if you are still groggy or overwhelmed.

Surgery can be a rewarding but intense experience. Be kind to yourself and give your body the rest it needs and deserves!

Flowing  
UP  
is  
SUCH  
a  
Vibe

## CHAPTER SIX

# Your Recovery

It may feel like your surgery is the end of a long plastic surgery journey. However, you still need to take proactive steps to help your body heal and recover.

Everyone is unique and responds to pain, injury and healing differently. Your experience may look much different than that of a friend, an influencer you follow or your favorite celebrity who has had the same procedure. You may experience fatigue, swelling, bruising and lack of mobility. You must give yourself some grace during this time. Do not compare your recovery to anyone else's – just follow your plastic surgeon's directions, and above all... be patient.

Recovery is not a race; it is a process. Reminder: Surgery is traumatic for the body. The first few days postop can – and probably will – feel rough. In the coming weeks, as your body starts to heal, you will feel more like your old self again. However, that doesn't mean it is time for you to test your limits. Your body still needs time to adjust and recover. To ensure your recovery is a smooth one and limit your chances of experiencing complications and infections, consider these pillars of recovery:

- ▷ **Postop care** – Your plastic surgeon will likely provide you with detailed postop instructions. These are not guidelines. You must follow these instructions to help you heal and achieve the best result possible following surgery. These instructions may include notes about tissue massage, activity restrictions, physical therapy exercises, wound treatment, drainage and postoperative garments. Not following these instructions can increase your risk of infection, slow the healing process, and could lead to significant complications.
- ▷ **Diet and nutrition** – Some plastic surgeons also recommend a specific postop diet. Nutrition and hydration play a significant role in helping your body heal. Avoiding processed foods and sticking to whole grains, protein, fruits and vegetables can help

reduce inflammation, promote better blood flow and aid recovery. Some patients must avoid excess sodium, also found extensively in highly processed and fast foods, because it can cause additional swelling and water retention. Your surgeon may also recommend an increase in protein. Consuming alcohol post-surgery is also a no-no because it can dehydrate the body, thin the blood, increase inflammation and slow wound healing. Staying hydrated and drinking plenty of water are crucial to boosting metabolism and digestion, which can slow down after surgery.

- ▷ **Activity** – Adjusting your activity levels is always tricky. You may need to limit specific activities to avoid stress and strain on the surgery site. Still, you may be encouraged to engage in light activities to enhance mobility, improve blood flow and ease aches. It can be a delicate balance. Follow your plastic surgeon’s recommendations and start slow. Remember, household chores are still activities. Your surgeon may advise against going to the gym for the first few weeks or months postop. That doesn’t mean it is okay to go on a marathon cleaning spree, pulling out the vacuum and washing windows. Those can also be intense activities that you need to back away from as you recover.

### *What to Expect from Immediate Postoperative Care*

Now you know that recovery is a process and what to expect from the overall recovery journey. But what can you expect to experience in the hours and days postop? The answer is different for every patient, depending on the extent of the procedure and your own physiology. However, in the hours and days following most surgeries, patients can experience the following:

- Pain
- Soreness
- Bruising
- Swelling
- Limited movement or range of motion
- Fatigue

Some people may also feel nauseous or lightheaded immediately after surgery as the effects of anesthesia wear off. Your plastic surgeon may also address how much drainage or residual bleeding is considered normal, depending on the type of surgery.

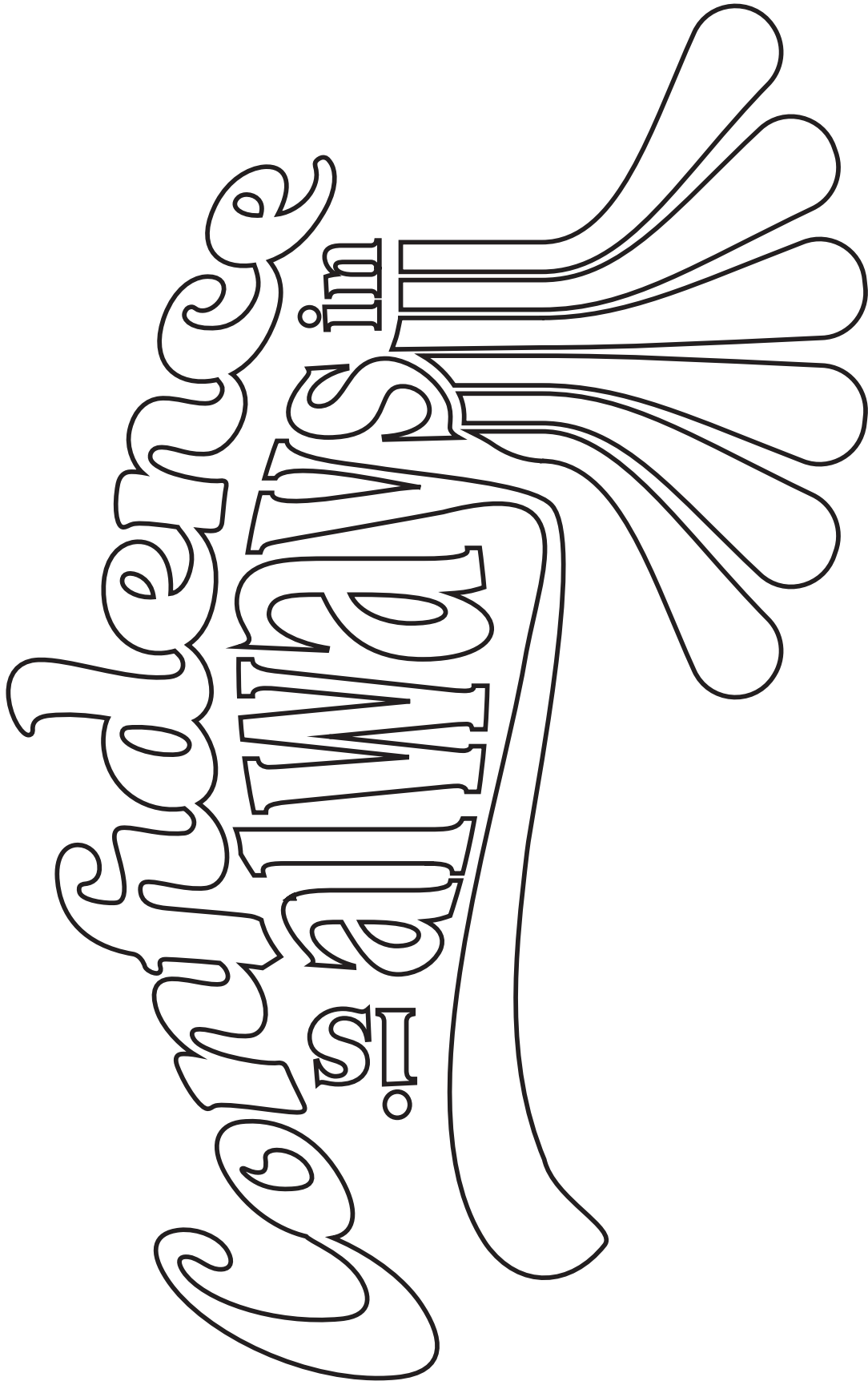
Your plastic surgeon will also outline what to look for during the healing process that may indicate a potential problem or complication, like an infection. If you experience any of the following side effects, immediately contact your plastic surgeon's office and follow their instructions. In emergencies, seek immediate medical attention.

Potential signs of concern can include:

- Fever
- Redness, swelling or heat at or around the surgical site
- Vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Lower extremity pain or swelling
- Excessive bleeding or drainage
- Excessive pus
- An open wound or open surgical incision
- A foul smell coming from the wound or incision site

Take all postop and wound care instructions seriously to help reduce the risk of infection and complications. Additionally, take all medications as prescribed. Ask your plastic surgeon whether it is safe to use over-the-counter medications like pain relievers or supplements during recovery. The last thing you want is to experience a bad reaction due to mixing prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements. Some pain-relieving prescription drugs, like opioids, can cause digestive issues. Your plastic surgeon may also recommend stool softeners after surgery to help treat or prevent constipation.

Contact your plastic surgeon's office if you have additional questions about your recovery. While many patients find community online to discuss their recovery, results and ask questions, specific concerns and questions about your procedure and recovery should be referred to your plastic surgeon's office. Remember, your plastic surgeon wants to help you achieve the best result possible, so if you have concerns or questions, all you need to do is ask!





## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Ongoing Postop Care and Maintenance

As you heal, you may feel ready to take on the world again. Slow down. If you want to maximize your recovery and plastic surgery results, you still need to consider ongoing postop care and maintenance.

You already know proper nutrition and hydration are crucial to healing. You also learned what to avoid to not derail your progress, like excessive or early activity and alcohol. What else is there to consider?

Depending on the surgery, some plastic surgeons recommend a skincare regimen that can help reduce the appearance of postop scars – scars are unavoidable with surgery. While surgical techniques can help minimize the appearance of scars, there are also products and skincare strategies to help scars fade over time. These strategies and products work best when used towards the beginning of your recovery journey.

In the first few weeks of recovery, the incision is still a wound, not a scar. As it heals, many plastic surgeons recommend keeping it covered and moisturized with a thick ointment. Follow your doctor's postop instructions and use the products they recommend. Depending on the type of surgery, that may include postsurgical garments, medical tape, gauze, bandages and tissue bridge devices to reduce tension on the scar.

After stitches are removed, you may want to explore silicone-based scar management systems like ointments or strips. While your incision is healing, cells called fibroblasts deposit collagen at the wound. Collagen helps wound healing but is also one of the primary components of scar tissue.

Your plastic surgeon can recommend products like silicone-based ointments or scar strips or sheets that may help reduce the appearance of the scar. These products create a protective barrier over the scar, keep the healing tissue hydrated and help regulate

collagen production. Silicone products can also soften the scar and minimize some of the discoloration that can appear. Sheets and strips may also help by applying light pressure to the wound, which can help flatten raised scars and reduce tension around the incision site.

If you haven't already, adding sunscreen to your skincare routine is always a good idea, especially following surgery. Protecting your scar from the sun is critical in the first-year postop. Scar tissue is extremely sensitive and can burn quickly. Sun and UV exposure can also darken the color of scars.

### *How to Minimize Scarring Postop*

One of the things patients tend to worry about postop is scarring. If you've undergone a surgical procedure requiring any incision, you will likely have a scar. However, surgical techniques and postop care instructions can help minimize the appearance of scars, leaving you with a beautiful result.

Depending on the procedure, your plastic surgeon can help minimize the appearance of scars by:

- ▷ *Using strategic incision placement to hide, disguise or add shape to the incision to mask the appearance of a scar when the incision heals.*
- ▷ *Using suturing techniques to help minimize scarring.*
- ▷ *Using endoscopic surgery when possible.*
- ▷ *Using new implants or other technology that can allow them to make smaller incisions when performing a procedure.*

How can you help minimize the appearance of scars after surgery:

- ▷ *Follow your plastic surgeon's postop instructions and practice proper wound care.*
- ▷ *Stay hydrated and drink plenty of fluids during recovery.*
- ▷ *Minimize movement that could pull at the scar or surrounding skin.*
- ▷ *Cover the incision with an occlusive ointment like Aquaphor.*
- ▷ *Use silicone-based scar treatments like silicone strips, gel sheets or ointment.*
- ▷ *Protect your healing skin from the sun, and always use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.*
- ▷ *Do not pick at your skin or scab!*

Talk to your plastic surgeon if you have questions or concerns about the incision, how it is healing or what else you can do to minimize the appearance of the scar.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Exploring Mental Health During Recovery

While much of the plastic surgery process is obviously focused on the physical self, it's also important to understand how the journey impacts a patient's mental health and well-being. You may experience many complex emotions. Some patients struggle at first with recognizing themselves in the mirror. Some may question their decision to undergo plastic surgery. Still, others have concerns about coping with the full weight of recovery as they may be unable to engage in activities they enjoy for a lengthier period than initially expected.

Cycling through these emotions, in addition to feeling joy, excitement and anxiety, is normal. Recovery can be, in a word, complicated, and while there is a "normative" range, no two bodies are exactly alike, so no two recoveries are going to be either. Emerging from your surgery with the best outcome possible isn't just about the way you look – it's equally about how you feel. Although experiencing a range of feelings following plastic surgery is common, some factors can make specific individuals prone to experiencing more intense mental health concerns, such as:

- Preexisting psychological conditions
- Lack of support from family or friends
- Body dysmorphia

Even those who felt 100 percent prepared to undergo plastic surgery may feel a sense of confusion, loss and stress after surgery, mainly because of the time it takes to see the results in all their glory.

### *Comparison Is the Thief of Joy*

An adage of social media is, "Never compare your documentary to another's highlight reel." And with plastic surgery, this wisdom has never held truer. One of the reasons some

may experience anxiety about their recovery is that they are comparing their results and recovery timeline to someone else's. While online and social communities are helpful for support and understanding, it is a good reminder that, again, no two recoveries will be exactly the same. Beginning from a foundation of informed decision-making is key and understanding as much as possible before surgery about your plastic surgeon, the procedure, the recovery timeline and managing expectations can all help make the mental and physical healing after the procedure a little easier to cope with.

### *Tips for Managing Your Mental Health*

It is good to acknowledge your feelings and explore where they come from. You are not alone, and there are resources available to help you manage feelings, emotions and expectations. Strategies that may help you explore and understand your feelings can include:

- Journaling
- Using phrases, music and/or images for focusing
- Mindful breathing exercises
- Talking with family or friends
- Finding a support network
- Talking to your plastic surgeon
- Seeking professional mental health help

Again, your plastic surgery journey is personal, and you cannot compare it to anyone else's. You've got this!

## CHAPTER NINE

# Financial Considerations

It is one of the most asked questions in plastic surgery, yet, one of the most challenging to answer: How much can you expect to pay for your procedure? The answer is not black and white. Numerous factors influence the cost of plastic surgery, including:

- The experience of the plastic surgeon
- The cost of living in your area (geographic location)
- The specific procedure
- The intensity of the procedure
- Facility fees
- Surgical team and anesthesia-related fees
- Cost of materials

The final cost of a plastic surgery procedure reflects a patient's specific needs and desired outcome, in addition to the surgeon's skill, experience, and the region where you are getting surgery. It's best to discuss the cost during your initial consultation or subsequent appointments before the day of surgery. That gives you a better understanding of what to expect, and you can plan your finances accordingly, whether saving for your surgery or exploring financing options.

You may also explore your health insurance options in some situations. Although many people view plastic surgery as elective, some procedures fall into the category of "medically necessary." For instance, your private health insurance may cover breast reductions, rhinoplasty and other procedures if there is documentation to prove that the procedure is medically necessary in your situation. However, because there are multiple health insurance companies in the United States, it is best to discuss your options with your specific insurance provider and your plastic surgeon's office to find out what is and is not covered by your plan.

## ***Don't Put a Price Tag on Your Health and Safety***

It is natural to experience “sticker shock” when exploring plastic surgery options. Now is not the time to look for a bargain, however, when placing your face, your body and even your life in the hands of your plastic surgeon. Sometimes, it helps to think about plastic surgery in these terms – you aren't just paying for a procedure; you are paying for the skills, experience and resources that your highly educated and exceptionally trained, board-certified plastic surgeon brings to the operating table. Part of what you are paying for is also the personalized postoperative care and availability of your plastic surgeon.

If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be wary of physicians who price their services well below the national or regional average. You should also exercise caution if you are considering plastic surgery tourism and looking for medical care outside the country to save money. Travel and surgery aren't always a healthy combination, so it's important to have access to your surgeon should a complication arise.

## CHAPTER TEN

# Frequently Asked Plastic Surgery Questions

### *What is the most requested plastic surgery procedure in the United States?*

According to the 2023 ASPS Procedural Statistics Report, liposuction and breast augmentation are two of the most popular plastic surgery procedures in the U.S. For the third year in a row, liposuction remained the most popular procedure, with breast augmentation and tummy tuck trailing just behind.

### *How do I know what plastic surgery procedure is right for me?*

No one can answer that question but you. However, an experienced ASPS Member Surgeon can help guide you to the answer by discussing your aesthetic goals and offering surgical solutions that address your needs, concerns and unique physical anatomy.

### *Does having plastic surgery hurt?*

Pain is subjective and everyone's tolerance is different, but all individuals will experience some level of discomfort after undergoing a plastic surgery procedure. Your specific type of procedure will also have some impact on the level of pain. Minimally invasive procedures, such as injectables, will obviously hurt less than a surgical procedure. However, your plastic surgeon will work with you to manage these side effects and help make you as comfortable as possible during recovery. Today, many plastic surgeons help patients manage pain through non-narcotic medications and topical numbing agents to make recovery more comfortable.

### ***Are there risks involved?***

Plastic surgery is real surgery. All surgery carries benefits, risks and side effects. The risks involved with plastic surgery depend on the type of procedure, length and intensity. Your plastic surgeon will discuss the potential risks associated with any procedure so you can decide whether plastic surgery is right for you. You can also help minimize surgical risks by ensuring the surgeon you choose has been boardcertified by ABPS and performs your surgery at an accredited facility. All ASPS Member Surgeons meet these criteria.

### ***What is recovery like, and how long does it take?***

Like so many other questions, the answer depends on your unique situation. You may feel ready to take on the world in as little as a few days after neuromodulator injections, while your friend may need six to eight weeks to recover from a breast augmentation. Your age, health, lifestyle and the procedure you are undergoing can all impact your recovery and how long it takes.

### ***How do I pay for plastic surgery?***

Payment arrangements vary. Some plastic surgery offices require payment in full before surgery. That may mean you must save or make financial arrangements to cover your plastic surgery bills and other related expenses. Some offices offer payment plans or financing options, while others allow you to finance through third-party financial services. CareCredit is the endorsed partner of ASPS for patient financing needs.

If your procedure is deemed medically necessary, your private health insurance plan may also pick up all or a portion of the cost, depending on your insurance company and coverage. It is best to ask about your payment options during the initial consultation, so you know what to expect and how to plan your finances accordingly.

***Do your homework, but don't be afraid to ask your plastic surgeon questions!***

They want you to ask questions, no matter how “silly” or “embarrassing” you think those questions might be. The best candidate for plastic surgery is an educated patient!



# THE CARE YOU DESERVE

Every journey starts with a single step. If you've made it this far, congratulations! While this guide may be your roadmap, ASPS has extensive information and resources for anyone interested in plastic surgery procedures. From researching board-certified plastic surgeons to learning more about the latest trends and techniques in the specialty, PlasticSurgery.org offers a wealth of information for any procedure.

You have already come a long way. If you are ready to take the next step, know that you aren't taking it alone. It's time to move forward with confidence!

*It's time to move forward with confidence!*



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I deserve this  
and so much  
more

The text is rendered in a decorative, calligraphic style. The word 'I' is a simple, tall, outlined letter. 'deserve' is written in a cursive script with a large, decorative flourish on the 'd'. 'this' is in a simple, outlined, sans-serif font. 'and' is written in a cursive script. 'so' is in a simple, outlined, sans-serif font. 'much' is in a simple, outlined, sans-serif font. 'more' is written in a cursive script with a large, decorative flourish on the 'e'. A small heart is placed between 'and' and 'more'. There are also decorative flourishes on the 'd' of 'deserve' and the 'e' of 'more'.

WORKSHEET ONE

# Why Plastic Surgery?

*How do I feel physically?*

*How do I feel mentally?*

*Why do I want to get plastic surgery?*

*Why do I want to change about myself and why?*

*What type of plastic surgery do I want?*

*What results am I hoping to achieve?*

*Do I think these results are realistic?*



***Am I willing to take the time to research the procedure, plastic surgeons in my area, risks and results?***

***Do I have the time and energy to commit to the recovery process?***

***Do I have the means to afford the procedure I want?***

***If not, what am I willing to do to get there?***

***Do I have a support system in place post-operatively?***



## CHECKLIST

# Picking a Plastic Surgeon

### 1 *Check plastic surgeon certification*

Find out more about board-certified plastic surgeons in your area at:

[find.plasticsurgery.org](http://find.plasticsurgery.org)

[abplasticsurgery.org/public](http://abplasticsurgery.org/public)

### 2 *Check the accreditation of the surgery center where procedures take place*

You can locate more information about the quality, safety, cleanliness and accreditation of surgical facilities at:

[American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities](#)

[Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care](#)

[The Joint Commission™](#)

You should also look into whether the facility is certified to participate in the Medicare program under [Title XVIII](#) and licensed by the state where it operates.

### 3 *Check education and residency*

You want to work with a plastic surgeon who has attended medical school and received special training in plastic surgery. You can find information about education and residency through:

[Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education](#)

[Federation of State Medical Boards](#)

You can also find information about the credentials of a plastic surgeon by going to your state's medical board website.

## WORKSHEET TWO

# Questions to Ask Your Plastic Surgeon During Your Consultation

- What board certifications do you hold?
- Where will the surgery take place?
- Is the surgical facility accredited?
- Am I a good candidate for this procedure?
- Is this a procedure you perform frequently?
- What are the benefits?
- What are the risks?
- How do you address emergencies or complications?
- What type of anesthesia is needed, and who will administer my anesthesia?
- How long is recovery?
- What does the recovery process look like for this procedure?
- What do I need to do to prepare for surgery?
- What are my payment options?
- Who can I contact after surgery if I have questions or need additional help?
- What is the schedule for follow-up appointments?

## WORKSHEET THREE

# During Your Consultation

### *Surgeon Office Checklist*

- Is the office clean and organized?
- Was the staff friendly and professional when checking you in for your consultation?

### *During Your Consultation*

- Did your surgeon greet you and introduce him or herself?
- Did your surgeon listen to your needs and concerns?
- Do you believe the surgeon understands your expectations?
- Did the surgeon thoroughly explain your options?
- Did the surgeon answer your questions?

### *Financial Planning*

- Did you discuss the potential cost of the procedure?
- Does your surgery require a down payment?
- Did you discuss payment options with the plastic surgeon's office?

### *Additional Questions for Your Plastic Surgeon:*

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## WORKSHEET FOUR

# After Your Consultation

*Did you feel comfortable with this surgeon?*

*Did you feel comfortable asking questions?*

*Did the office offer you documents outlining the surgery, recovery, and what to expect?*

*Did you walk away feeling like you understand what's ahead?*





## WORKSHEET FIVE

# Surgery Day Checklist

- Do you have your identification?
- Do you have all the necessary paperwork?
- Are you wearing comfortable, surgery-appropriate clothes?
- Do you have a method of payment if you need to pay upfront?
- Did you make the necessary drop-off and pick-up arrangements?
- Do you have someone available to help you during recovery?

### *Additional Questions for Your Plastic Surgeon:*

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