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TODAY

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**Finding a
plastic surgeon**

Advice from
Extreme Makeover's
Garth Fisher, MD

THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT



Extreme Makeover's Garth Fisher, MD, gives you tips on how to pick a plastic surgeon

IN THIS INTERVIEW WITH
MICKEY KARRAM, MD,
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF
THE FOUNDATION FOR
FEMALE HEALTH AWARENESS

How should a woman begin the process of choosing a plastic surgeon?

Schedule at least several consultations with plastic surgeons. When you meet with them, look closely and very critically at their "before and after" pictures. A surgeon needs patience and artistic skill in the operating room. Through the photographs, you can see a surgeon's style and whether or not the results look natural. The surgeon's personal taste is a factor. For instance, sometimes, in my view, plastic surgeons make the eyebrows arch too much, but that might be their sense of what looks good.

Get referrals from friends who are very happy with their results and feel that their plastic surgeons really took care of them.

Make sure that a physician is board-certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. (Some groups, such as the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery are not recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties, so it's important to ask if a physician is board-certified and to identify the certifying organization.)

Ask surgeons for patient referrals to find out what other patients have experienced with doctors that you are considering.

There are facial plastic surgeons who have completed residencies in ear, nose and throat and thus just do facial plastic surgery unlike conventional plastic surgeons who

plastic surgery



perform face and body surgery. Do you think that the consumer needs to understand that difference?

The training program that a board-certified plastic surgeon has completed is ideal, but appropriately trained facial plastic surgeons are also qualified to do cosmetic surgery in their field. A physician trained in ear, nose and throat, however, should not do breast augmentation or other procedures not in their specialty.

In your opinion, how much of plastic surgery is art and how much is a healing process?

I don't think that artistry is reflected by just closing an incision. The surgeon must always adhere to basic principles of wound care: keeping the incision tension free, maintaining the patient's health, advising the patient to not smoke and to avoid sun exposure. I believe there is a side that requires an artistic sense—where to put the incision, how hard to pull, and what vectors to use for facial surgery and the rejuvenation procedures. Some surgeons just put implants in, and we've all seen the breast implants that look like headlights. There are ways to create very natural looking breasts. A lot of it is the personal taste of the doctor. Who knows whether a given result was due to bad technique or if it was something that pleased the doctor. I believe a tremendous amount of artistic sense is necessary for a natural result.

It seems to me that more plastic surgery is being done these days. Are there data to support that?

What I'm hearing since Extreme Makeover started is that plastic surgery procedures are up 30%.

What questions should a patient ask during her initial consultation with a plastic surgeon?

- Is the physician board-certified (and by what board)?
- What percentage of his or her practice is represented by the procedure you want?
- What are the non-surgical and surgical alternatives?
- What are the common complications? (If a surgeon tells you that he never has complications, you should get up and leave. Every surgeon has complications.)
- How are complications managed financially?
- How are most patients referred? Does the physician provide financial incentives for referrals? Avoid surgeons who pressure you or provide financial incentives or referrals.

It's important to develop a trusting relationship. You should feel that the physician is honest and not evasive with his answers. Don't be afraid to shop around until you find the right surgeon for you.