

Forward

What You Need to Know Before Having Plastic Surgery

By Juan Brou, MD

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Choosing to have plastic surgery is a big decision with important ramifications for you. Many people come away from the experience saying it was the best thing they have ever done for themselves. They feel they have a new lease on life. They look better, feel rejuvenated and have a renewed sense of self-confidence.

These emotional changes that result sometimes from very subtle physical changes are most gratifying and remind me daily why I love my work.

Remember, all surgeries carry some risk and while plastic surgery can improve an aspect of our body, it is important to have realistic expectations. A good doctor will reassure you when you're making good choices and discourage you if you're not. A dishonest doctor will rush to perform any requested procedure, whether beneficial or not.

Choosing the right plastic surgeon and making the right decisions for you requires doing some homework. It's been said that many patients spend more time choosing a new pair of shoes than they do choosing their plastic surgeon.

Researching wisely and thoroughly before choosing your plastic surgeon is critical and can help ensure you make the best decisions possible and that you will be pleased with your results.

I have prepared this booklet to help you do just that.



Sincerely,

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Chapter 1 – Research Matters

Less invasive aesthetic procedures that promise incredible results – they’re all the rage at the growing number of “medical spas” nationwide. Yet each procedure brings some physical and financial risks for the consumer.

Technological advances and a multi-billion-dollar market bring a flood of new treatments that promise quicker results, less pain and shorter down time. Yet many have not been scientifically proven effective. Instead, their success largely depends upon the intensity of their marketing campaigns and the media attention garnered.

Competition for your cosmetic dollars is fierce, especially in the current economy. Doctors are pressured to have the “latest and greatest” medical equipment, when only time will tell if that equipment is really effective. And when that time comes, they’ve already moved on to still newer equipment.

Many more medical practitioners, pressured by the steady reduction in reimbursement, are also deciding to supplement their income by dabbling in the cosmetic world without specialized training.

That’s why it is so important that you do your homework before undergoing any cosmetic procedure, surgical or non-surgical.



In the chapters ahead, we outline important factors to consider when contemplating any cosmetic procedure.

Do your homework and don’t let advertising or special pricing drive decisions that impact your appearance and your health. Poor results may cost you a lot more to correct, and can have lasting effects.

Chapter 2 – Qualifications Count

If you are one of the millions who is considering plastic surgery this year, do take the time to research the person you will trust to handle your cosmetic procedure.



**American Board
of Medical Specialties**
Higher standards. Better care.®

Board certification by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is the gold standard for cosmetic surgery patients. ABMS is a 75-year-old, nonprofit organization established to oversee and regulate the certification of medical specialties. ABMS certification involves rigorous training and examinations for medical specialists to ensure the highest quality of education and care.

Out of the 24 specialties recognized by ABMS only four have emphasis in cosmetic care. These are:

1. Dermatology
2. Plastic surgery
3. Otolaryngology (Ear, Nose, and Throat) subspecialty of facial plastic surgery.
4. Ophthalmology with its subspecialty of oculoplastic surgery. (Oculoplastic surgery is the cosmetic, corrective, and reconstructive surgery of the eye. It manages and repairs problems primarily related to the tissues or structures surrounding the eye, rather than the eyeball itself.)

Organizations such as the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery or the American Academy of Aesthetic Medicine are not recognized by the ABMS.

Membership in the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is another benchmark of quality. ASPS members are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, have at least six years of training and experience in surgery, with three years specifically in plastic surgery. ASPS members also fulfill continuing education requirements, including patient safety techniques. They adhere to a strict code of ethics and operate only in accredited medical facilities.



The qualifications matter and so does experience. How many of these procedures has your surgeon done? Choosing an experienced surgeon is another way to help ensure you get a good result.

The websites of the American Board of Medical Specialties and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons may also prove useful as you prepare for your cosmetic procedure.

Those websites are: www.abms.org and www.plasticsurgery.org

Chapter 3 – Setting Your Appointment



When you call for an initial consultation or appointment, consider how the staff treats you on the phone. Are they friendly, courteous and helpful? Or do they treat you like a number? If you are not treated well on the phone, it could be a good indicator that you should hang up and call the office of another plastic surgeon where your business will be valued from the start.

How well is the office run? Is the staff organized and do they have a system in place that makes it easy for you to schedule an appointment? The entire staff should be concerned with providing you an enjoyable, stress-free experience.

Is the office clean and well-kept? First impressions can be a good benchmark for the way you will be treated as a patient. If you are made to feel unwanted or uncomfortable by the staff, chances are your comfort level will not increase when you meet the physician.



Chapter 4 – Meeting Your Surgeon

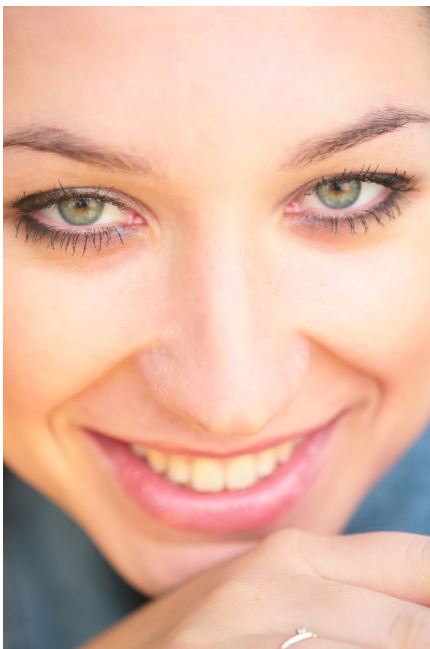
Make sure your first appointment includes a meeting with the surgeon who will handle your procedure. Meeting your surgeon and feeling comfortable with him or her is essential. Only with face-to-face, personal communication can you make sure that proper understanding is achieved on both sides.



Do not settle for an incomplete, brief meeting or, even worse, a meeting with just an office staff member. You need to meet with the surgeon and tell him or her everything that is on your mind.

Communication is a critical part of successful plastic surgery. Explain what you hope to achieve and why. Don't be embarrassed to share your feelings. Plastic surgery decisions are often emotionally-based and personal in nature. The best plastic surgeons are great listeners and good communicators. They are friendly and compassionate, and truly concerned about learning what you hope to accomplish.

Once you have clearly communicated your desires, a good plastic surgeon will take your wishes and needs under advisement and then offer you an honest, realistic assessment of what can and should be done.



Sometimes surgery is not the only or even the best option. There are many new non-surgical procedures that may help you achieve your goals and a good plastic surgeon will share these options with you, providing insight and information on the benefits and risks associated with both the surgical and non-surgical options so that you can make an informed decision.

The best surgeons will also help you set realistic expectations going into surgery. Having realistic expectations is often the single best predictor for being satisfied with the results. Although most patients can benefit from plastic surgery, an 80-year-old cannot be made to look 20. Not yet anyway, but perhaps someday!

Chapter 5 – Ask for References

Most plastic surgeons can show you before and after photos of previous patients. These can provide good examples of their artistry and surgical skill. However, don't stop there. Ask to speak directly with at least three former patients about their experiences and outcomes.

Many patients get referrals from friends or acquaintances. Others get references from their primary care physician or another medical specialist. Both can be helpful, but it is strongly recommended that you take the time to speak with actual patients, especially those who have undergone the procedure you are considering.

It is perfectly acceptable to ask for referral names and phone numbers. A quality plastic surgeon will expect such a request, and have names and phone numbers readily available.



Chapter 6 – Cost-Saving Tips

Bargain-hunting is ill-advised when you are talking about your appearance and your overall well-being. Finding a qualified plastic surgeon is paramount. However, there are some factors that can help reduce your costs without sacrificing results or safety.

Sometimes, it may take a combination of procedures to achieve the overall results you are seeking. Perhaps you want a facelift and a tummy tuck. Or maybe you're considering breast augmentation to counteract the effects of childbearing and time, plus fat grafting to restore a youthful fullness to your face.

Talk to your surgeon about EVERYTHING and let him or her help you figure out how to best accomplish your goals.

Multiple procedures can sometimes be done in one overall surgery, which results in a lower cost than multiple single procedures. Many patients also find this beneficial because they face only one recovery period, which translates into less downtime when compared to undergoing multiple single-procedure surgeries.



Of course, there are limits. One cannot pack too much into a single surgical session without increasing the risk of complications. So talk to your surgeon about what can and can't be safely accomplished.

Timing can also impact cost. For instance, tell your doctor ahead of time if you can be flexible when scheduling your procedure. It is not uncommon for plastic surgeons to have unexpected openings and being work you in quickly when that happens may inspire a reward in terms of a slightly reduced fee.

Other scheduling considerations can sometimes work in your favor too. So ask your doctor how you might achieve your goals at the best price without sacrificing safety or quality.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

We hope this report has answered some of your questions and given you some helpful tips. Undergoing plastic surgery can be an extremely rewarding, life-altering experience.

If you have further questions or would like to discuss your personal plastic surgery goals, please call us to schedule your own FREE personal consultation with Dr. Juan Brou, board certified plastic surgeon in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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