

ASK THE EXPERT

# A plastic surgeon offers some tips on the procedures

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**P**lastic surgery might have been hurt by the recession, but it still draws a sizable following of people hoping to improve their appearance.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that some major cosmetic surgery procedures, such as breast augmentation and liposuction, declined between 2007 and 2008 — the most recent figures available. But minimally invasive procedures grew in popularity during the same period. That includes treatments with Botox, laser skin resurfacing, and laser treatment of veins in the legs.

Dr. Michael D. Cohen of Towson's Cosmetic Surgery Center of Maryland recently answered questions about choosing the right cosmetic surgeon. Above all, he says, do your research before agreeing to a procedure.

**QUESTION:** What's the first thing one should do when choosing a plastic surgeon?

**ANSWER:** Make sure your plastic surgeon is ... certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

You would want to ask your plastic surgeon what do they specialize in and "Have you done these procedures often?" You would want to ask for before-and-after photos. You would want to ask for some patient references and testimonials, to get a sense of how comfortable your plastic surgeon is with his or her results.

**Q:** Who are some of the best candidates for plastic surgery?

**A:** You want people to have reasonable expectations. You want to agree and confirm that the problem or the concern of theirs is real and something that is fixable. You want to look out for people whose expectations are unreal or [who are] seeking out plastic surgery to correct other social or emotional issues. Of course everybody knows of celebrities that have had extreme plastic surgery. As a responsible plastic surgeon, you really want to resist the

temptation to get involved with treating patients who have had multiple procedures performed on the same area and are never satisfied.

**Q:** How many procedures is too many?

**A:** There is no fixed number. It varies by patient. Some people will take the opportunity to combine a few procedures together.

What it does is that it actually allows the recovery to be lumped into one. It's cost effective because they're only undergoing one anesthetic. And they're sort of creating more improvement in more areas to make them happier. But most people usually ask about one or two procedures, and then occasionally people ask for a little bit more, but if they're good candidates, it's not unreasonable.

**Q:** What are some of the risks associated with procedures?

**A:** We're usually operating on fairly healthy, active, fit people. So the complications and the risks are actually rather low. But like with any surgery, there are risks for bleeding and infection and other more catastrophic occurrences, but they're very, very infrequent.

**Q:** How realistic are plastic surgery shows like "Nip and Tuck"?

**A:** Well, I've only seen that show once, just out of curiosity, and it is so far from reality on so many different levels. Plastic surgeons are some of the most highly trained and experienced physicians and surgeons in the country. To become a plastic surgeon, you have to go through, typically, general surgery training, plastic surgery training and many, many years of residency. So plastic surgeons take their craft and their art very, very seriously and typically don't involve themselves in interpersonal relationships with patients and all the sort of silliness. Not every plastic surgeon drives expensive cars, and so on.



## HEALTH CALENDAR

**A JOINT EFFORT: THE CAUSES AND CURES OF JOINT PAIN** A Johns Hopkins orthopedic surgeon will answer questions about degenerative joint disease and recent treatment advances, 4-5:30 p.m. today at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, 4940 Eastern Ave. Free. 410-550-KNOW.

**DAY OF DANCE** Learn about the health benefits of dance. Country line dancing, belly dancing, hip-hop, Zumba, salsa and Charleston presentations and demonstrations will be offered. Screenings including cholesterol, bone density, body mass index, blood pressure, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday at Severna Park Community Center, 623 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd. No registration required. 410-787-4367.

**FROM THE HEART: AN AFTER-NOON OF HEART HEALTH AND EDUCATION FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY** The University of Maryland Medical System event will feature heart-healthy cooking demonstrations, screenings and seminars on wellness. Also, there will be music and activities for children, 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Sunday at Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture, 30 E. Pratt St. Free with museum admission. 443-263-1800.

**HEALTHY SHOPPING TOUR** St. John's Hospital will offer tips for selecting affordable foods that provide energy and nutrition that make you feel satisfied, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Wednesday. Whole Foods Market, 1330 Smith Ave., Mount Washington. Free, but pre-registration required. 410-601-9355.

**LATINO HEALTH FAIR** Event will include screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, skin cancer and other problems; health education materials in Spanish; HIV testing; dental screenings for children; and refreshments. At noon March 6 at Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, 10431 Twyn Rivers Road, Columbia. Free. 410-740-7696.