

Cosmetic Surgery: For One and All

By Casey Gillespie

Forget the idea that only strippers and Suzy socialites are the ones getting plastic surgery. These days, everyone from high school girls to ex-boyfriends have had something “done.” Here’s a prime example: I was out with some friends recently when I bumped into an old co-worker. We started chatting and I commented on how good she looked. I was trying to be nice, but I could barely see her face for her swelled chest. She willingly indulged the fact that she’d gotten implants the week before. Still in partial bandages, and without me even asking, she whipped those babies out and offered to let me feel. I gracefully declined, thank you.

In an image-conscious society, shame is a thing of the past. The idea is the closer we are to perfection, the better. Some say that if you aren’t getting work done, you are the outcast. Remember when it was considered beautiful for a woman to have a little meat on her bones? It was a sign one was of the upper class. Today, it’s the same thing with cosmetic surgery—it’s like a badge of honor; it means you can afford it.

Now, women are banging down the plastic surgeons’ doors looking for the fountain of youth. Ever

noticed that it’s taboo for a woman to grow old in society? We’re fascinated by youth. For men, more often than not, power, money and reputation often stand in for beauty, but for women, sexiness is never ascertained by status alone. It’s a fact: we refuse to grow old gracefully. What exactly does a 55-year-old woman *really* look like? Turn on the television or open a magazine and take a gander at the slew of wrinkle-free foreheads and non-fat bodies we wake up and compare ourselves to everyday.

New Markets

Many women work out religiously and eat right because they find a slender, fit body empowering. It gives a lot of other women a sense of detachment, self-mastery and power—qualities that are highly valued in our society. As Americans, we’ve been taught we can overcome anything and we don’t have to deal with what nature has given us. For that reason, the women sweating it out on the treadmills and in kickboxing classes at the gym are the same women waiting in line to get Botox injections at the physicians’ offices. And this doesn’t mean women in their 40s or 50s like you probably think; 20- and 30-somethings are the first ones in line. From eyelid surgery, liposuction, nose jobs, tattoos and breast augmentations, these women are not alone. When asked, “Why, oh why?” Most

respond, “To make more money, to get farther in life. Some say it’s not right, but I’m not going to try and fight it.”

There is a widely held belief that there is a time in life when beauty peaks—for women, it’s between 20 and 35 and for men it’s a little older. If you were to plot it on a graph, the line would gradually climb until it peaks, plateau for a short while and then falls rapidly. The idea is that if you have cosmetic surgery at a younger age to look prettier, your beauty will peak higher and hopefully last longer as you get older.

“Men and 20-somethings are the new market for cosmetic surgery.”

But don’t think men are by any means immune to these growing trends. They’re actually the new market. It is impossible to ignore the new wave of products created just for men. These new grooming (not “beauty”) products are everywhere from drug stores to cosmetic counters and range from cleansers to anti-wrinkle potions. Take a look at your favorite spa’s list of services, and you’ll find treatments specialized for men—guaranteed. Sure the marketing is different, but it has to be. Plastic surgery is being sold to men like power tools and sports cars—as accessories to make them

PMPR Cosmetic Forecast 2003/2004

more sexually appealing, influential in the business world and, of course, more masculine. Besides prescriptions for Viagra, men are getting Botox injections, eyelid surgery, hair transplants, pec implants, calf augmentation, buttock implant and—surprise, surprise—the most popular is liposuction.

“Why be yourself when you can be someone younger?”

New Trends

Among some of the newer trends is the decidedly hip Myobloc, which is similar to Botox in its effects, but has much quicker results—try 24 hours. Unfortunately, it doesn't last as long as Botox, but it's great if you need that extra something for your blind date tomorrow night. Why be yourself when you can be someone so much younger? Another cosmetic procedure—it's not even considered surgery—on the rise is the injection of your own fat cells, taken from places such as the thighs, into facial wrinkles. Oh, and that's not all. Another disturbing trend is the number of Asian Americans forfeiting their ethnic trademarks by having blepharoplasty (eyelift surgery) and rhinoplasty to make their features more “white.”

All in all, cosmetic surgery is a growing epidemic. Take a look at these facts:

- Botox is the number one nonsurgical procedure, up 2356% over the last five years. Last year alone 1.6 million procedures were performed.
- Top five cosmetic surgeries: liposuction, eyelid surgery, breast augmentation, nose reshaping and facelift.
- Of all cosmetic surgeries performed, 3.5% were on people 18-years-old and younger.
- A survey conducted by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in February 2002 found that 55% of Americans approve of cosmetic surgery. About 34% of the women would have surgery, while 19% of the men say they might consider cosmetic surgery now or in the future.

Further proof that this society will try anything to be more beautiful: the only trend in cosmetic surgery that is passé are saline breast implants, but that's only because they're illegal. Just goes to show there's a very fine line between vanity and health care.

But, isn't it time to forget about outer beauty and focus on inner beauty? We need to learn to love ourselves—right after that next Botox injection. **PMPR**

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