



# HOW TO SELECT YOUR SURGEON

**You may think that deciding what to have done is the most important decision when it comes to cosmetic surgery, but it's not – choosing the right surgeon is even more essential**

Most cosmetic surgery produces a positive outcome – but there isn't always a happy ending. We've all heard the horror stories about procedures going awry for medical reasons – for example, when an infection sets in or an implant leaks.

Then there are the aesthetic disasters such as lopsided boobs, 'wind tunnel' facelifts and trout pouts. Here are the questions you must ask before making that vital decision – don't have surgery until you've read them.

## Q Are you the person who'll actually be wielding the scalpel?

The only person you should talk to about your surgery is the surgeon who'll be performing your operation. If you're seeing a nurse or a consultant, ask to speak to the surgeon. If they say you can't do so, leave immediately. It's absolutely essential to meet your surgeon before your operation.

'Once you know you're talking to the surgeon, it's also important to ask if they'll be doing everything in the procedure,' says cosmetic surgery consultant Shannon Porter Leeman. 'Some doctors will do the opening incisions, the pulling and the tugging – and then let a junior stitch you up, which could affect scarring.'

## Q What qualifications do you have?

Don't be embarrassed to ask this question – any practitioner with the correct qualifications will be only too happy to tell you. And according to consultant plastic surgeon Mr Jag Chana from Sanctuary Cosmetic Surgeons, the only correct answer to this question is a qualification called an FRCS (Plast). 'This means they are a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and have specific training in plastic surgery,' says Mr Chana. 'It's also recommended that they're a member of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons.'

## Q What procedures do you suggest?

Remember that the surgeon is the expert. You may think your tired look is best removed by tackling your upper eyelids, but your surgeon may consider a brow lift more likely to give good results. And, having performed many such procedures in the past, the surgeon is likely to know what will best suit your case.

Every surgeon will give a different answer to this question, but you have to choose the person who you feel has your best interests at heart,' says London-based cosmetic

surgeon Mr Jan Stanek. 'If they present you with a list of procedures and you feel like they're selling you surgery, leave.'

## Q How many of my procedures did you do last year?

Like everything in life, practice makes perfect with cosmetic surgery. Most experts say your surgeon should've performed 30-50 procedures similar to the one you've decided on in the previous year. 'I'd also ask how many years they've been practising,' says Shannon Porter Leeman. 'It's a terrible thing to say, but I'd never see a surgeon in his thirties because I think someone needs to have been in practice for at least 10 years to excel at what they do.'

## Q What percentage of your operations does this procedure make up?

Many experts specialise in certain operations because they – or their patients – feel they have a particular flair for it. And this question is one way to determine if your surgeon favours your operation: obviously the higher the percentage, the more they specialise.

'It's less important if you're going for body surgery, for example breast implants, as most surgeons can work with these,' says Mr Chana. 'But if you're going for facial work, I'd always recommend a surgeon who specialises and I think it's absolutely essential for rhinoplasty.'

## Q Can I see 'before' and 'after' photos?

You need to see what the doctor is going to do for you – and viewing photographs may be better than asking to speak to a patient. 'Some clinics pay patients to talk about what they had done, so I wouldn't necessarily say you're going to get an unbiased opinion,' says consultant plastic surgeon Mr Rajiv Grover. 'The other benefit of photographs is that you can normally see the results of the work on someone with similar facial features to you.'

Also, don't miss out on another clue as to what your surgeon's end results look like. 'Look at the receptionist, nurses and other staff in the clinic,' says Shannon Porter Leeman. 'They'll often have had work done themselves. And if you can somehow see the surgeon's wife, then even better!'

## Q Who's the anaesthetist and how long have you worked with them?

Why do you need to know this? 'Because it could impact on your recovery time,' says Mr Grover. 'When an anaesthetist works with a surgeon a lot, they get to know how long he or she takes over an operation. Then they can adjust the anaesthetic accordingly. This can reduce postoperative sickness (which may worsen bruising) and make you feel generally better throughout your recovery.'

## Q What does this operation cost?

If you've done your research, you probably have an idea how much your procedure is likely to cost. 'But it's important to check exactly what that fee includes – particularly after the initial operation is over,' says Mr Grover. Also, you should be aware that around five per cent of cosmetic surgery procedures need to be repeated because something goes wrong or the patient isn't happy with the results. Most reputable surgeons won't charge extra for this, but the hospital and anaesthetist may not be included – the last thing you need when recovering from a second procedure is another bill.

## Q Do you have any questions for me?

If they haven't, run screaming for the hills. 'At the very least, a surgeon should go over your medical history, whether you smoke or drink heavily and talk about why you want the surgery and what you think you're going to look like afterwards,' says Mr Stanek. 'This information helps them determine whether or not you're a good candidate for surgery – if you're not, they shouldn't be afraid to turn you away.' You should also be concerned if the surgeon hasn't talked to you about risks and complications, recovery times and scarring. These questions should be standard, so if your surgeon hasn't mentioned them, ask why.

## Q Do I like my cosmetic surgeon?

'This is actually a question you need to ask yourself,' says Mr Stanek. 'First impressions are vital. You have to trust your surgeon's professional ability, but you also have to like them as a person. You want to feel that when you wake up feeling terrible or if something goes wrong, this person will be there for you.'

## Further information

● To check a surgeon's credentials, first visit [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org) and click on to 'list of registered medical practitioners'. All surgeons should be registered here. Then to check if they're a member of BAAPs, visit [www.baaps.org.uk](http://www.baaps.org.uk) and choose the 'find a surgeon' option

● Sanctuary Cosmetic Surgeons is a new initiative designed to make choosing a reputable surgeon easier. It has set up a nationwide network of surgeons who are all FRCS (Plast) and registered with BAAPS. It can also tell you what particular surgeons specialise in. To find out more, call 0845 2266007 or visit [www.sanctuarycosmeticsurgeons.co.uk](http://www.sanctuarycosmeticsurgeons.co.uk).

● Phone numbers and websites for surgeons quoted above are: Mr Jan Stanek (020-7487 4454, [www.janstanek.com](http://www.janstanek.com)); Mr Rajiv Grover (020-7486 4301, [www.safecosmeticsurgery.co.uk](http://www.safecosmeticsurgery.co.uk)); Mr Jag Chana (0845 2266007, [www.sanctuary-cosmeticsurgeons.co.uk](http://www.sanctuary-cosmeticsurgeons.co.uk)). ■

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