

Making it last



In 2011 alone, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons revealed that the number of aesthetic procedures continued to increase steadily by an average six percent annually and interestingly, not even one individual procedure decreased in popularity. Amongst these, Botox remained the most popular followed by breast augmentation, liposuction and eyelid surgery with tummy tucks not far behind in popularity. After any cosmetic surgery - dealing with days of post-surgery downtime, discomfort and financial outlay, the last thing you want to hear is that the results of your procedure will wear off over time. **Saadiya Ahmad** takes a closer look at how long cosmetic surgery lasts and how to reap maximum mileage out of your procedure.

Goal of Plastic Surgery

It is vital to remember that cosmetic surgery will not *stop* the biological clock, but will *reset* it, suggests Dr. Firas A. Hamdan, double board certified plastic surgeon at American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery Hospital. "The goal of cosmetic surgery is to keep patients looking at their best with minimal alteration or deformity, so when a patient wants a facelift, I explain to him/her that I aim to wind the clock back 7 to 10 years in appearance rather than perform a procedure that will last 7 to 10 years," he says. He also believes that no cosmetic surgery results should be absolutely permanent. "Plastic surgery has associated small risks of complication,

therefore if it were permanent; a complication would also be unfortunately, permanent." Also the term "permanent" is relative as procedures, such as a facelift for example, vary from person to person, and depend on an individual's lifestyle post operation.

Self Sabotage

There are also instances where patients, unknowingly, may be contributing to their own post surgical results disaster, he explains. "For example, a facelift on a female patient who takes care of her skin by avoiding sun exposure, uses a cosmeceutical grade moisturiser and importantly, is a non-smoker, will have a much longer result than that of an individual who sun-bathes, smokes, does not use moisturiser nor consumes a healthy diet."

Another example is an individual who has undergone abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) followed by a pregnancy; "This will undo the muscle plication and tightening and will cause stretching of the abdominal skin again." Similarly is the patient who has undergone liposculpture and weighs 70 kilos, for example but one year later,

gains 10 to 15 kilos. "The fat distribution may ultimately be odd or in cases of increased weight loss, as in 10 to 15 kilos, the skin may become loose," he warns.

RHINOPLASTY

Overview

Rhinoplasty is performed on the nose to correct any deformity in its shape and size. Dr. Hamdan says it can include soft tissue, cartilage or bony structure modification and shaping to get the ultimate best result. "A typical rhinoplasty consultation entails first and foremost a comprehensive interview with the patient to discuss their wishes, expectations and motives behind such a decision." This is followed by a detailed examination of the nose both externally and internally. Finally a realistic outcome needs to be discussed with the patient as well as possible risks, benefits, details about the post operative healing and how long it may take to achieve the final results of the operation.

How long the results last

One of the best aspects of rhinoplasty is that, unlike other facial cosmetic procedures, the results should last a lifetime. Yet ironically, between 20 percent and 25 percent of all rhinoplasty patients are unhappy with their results, according to recent data compiled by the *American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* (AAFPRS). As illustrated in a study in the February 2011 issue of *Plastic Surgery Practice* by board-certified facial US plastic surgeon Dr. Robert Kotler there are three technical reasons for rhinoplasty failures. Firstly, too much was done - as is the case with some contemporary noses that wear an invisible sign that reads, "I had a rhinoplasty." In second place are crookedness, irregularities and asymmetries in a case where the plastic surgeon is not adept at performing septoplasty to straighten the nose and at the same time improve breathing. Third is the surgery itself, whereby the patient becomes obsessed with a breathing deficiency because other causes of airway obstruction were not managed at surgery.

BLEPHAROPLASTY

Overview

Blepharoplasty surgery aims at reducing puffiness, droopiness, wrinkles and discolouration on the upper or lower eyelids or sometimes both, says Dr. Ahmed Ghanem, a consultant plastic surgeon at *Crescent Medical Centre*. "The surgery involves removing excess or loose eyelid skin, reducing or redistributing the fat pockets around the eye and strengthening the muscular part of the eyelids." The surgery is indicated mostly for cosmetic purposes, from getting rid of excess skin around the eyes, removing eye bags or simply to remove wrinkles and lines. However there are some instances where the procedure is performed for medical purposes. "This may be in a situation where the individual has excessively loose skin and/or the bulging fat affects the field of vision or causes a heaviness of the eyes," he explains.

How long the results last

Ageing is a relentless process of tissue degeneration resulting in loss of elasticity and stretching of skin and the rate of this process varies from individual to individual and depends on the person's genetics as well as overall lifestyle. According to Dr. Ghanem, blepharoplasty is one of the procedures that reverse the signs of aging very effectively and its results last for a long time,



however, recurrence of skin laxity can take place gradually over a period of 5 to 10 years. "The life span of this procedure depends on many factors such as skin elasticity, smoking, alcohol use, age and general health of the patient." He says that in order to prolong the result of surgery, patients should lead a healthy lifestyle by not smoking, using sun protection, cutting down alcohol consumption, getting adequate rest (avoiding exhaustion) and very importantly is to have sound and routine sleeping habits. Attention to these areas can prolong the improvement achieved by surgery.

FACE LIFT

Overview

A face lift, according to Dr. Ghanem, is the ultimate in facial rejuvenation procedures and if done properly by the right surgeon and for the right candidate, the result can never be less than fantastic. "There are many techniques for face lift, however, they almost all involve tightening the face's superficial muscular layer and cutting off the loose skin," explains Dr. Ghanem with most face lift patients being age 40 and older. "An ideal candidate is one with realistic expectations and who understands the limitations of surgery which could be caused by the condition and elasticity of the skin and other factors like previous surgeries and scars," he says.

How long the results last

While the results of a face lift, point out Dr. Ghanem, can last for 10 years or more, no face lift produces permanent results as the ageing process is ongoing. "However there are factors that determine how long face lift results can last; these include skin elasticity, tobacco use, alcohol consumption and the age when the procedure is

done," he says and suggests that for the rejuvenating effects to last longer, a sensible lifestyle is paramount as well as avoiding usage of unknown chemicals, including makeup products on the face. There have also been claims that the use of radio frequency treatments in skin rejuvenation can help with the results of a face lift, says Dr Ghanem but there are not enough documented scientific studies about its use following face lift surgery. "However, because of its action as a collagen synthesis stimulator, it might be useful among other factors in prolonging the result of a face lift," he says.v

NON-INVASIVE TECHNIQUES

The gripe against non-invasive techniques like Botox is that they just don't last long enough. Dr. Ghanem advises to get the most out of your results; the amount of the injection should be enough to naturally improve the wrinkles. "Also avoid completely freezing the facial muscles and do not lie down for four hours after the treatment." This is especially crucial in that the change in body position makes the injection less effective as a result of reduced muscle relaxation in the affected regions. Also you should also keep exercising. "Do plenty of exercises to realise the full effect of Botox; this is crucial since Botox attaches easily and quickly on active muscles in the facial area where you were treated," he explains. Frequency of the treatment is also highly discouraged. Overall a lasting result is the outcome of all these factors together, as well as how properly the procedure has been done by a well-trained specialist.

LIPOSUCTION

Overview

Liposuction is a procedure involving the mechanical removal of fat deposits from a specific area on the body to give a reduction in volume and a more contoured area, explains Dr. Qassim Ahli, Consultant Plastic Surgeon at Dermalase Clinic. "An ideal candidate for the procedure would be someone who is physically fit with stubborn areas of fat which despite exercise and following a healthy diet, still does not go." The technique involves mechanically breaking up and dislodging fatty deposits and then using a cannula to suck the fat out and sculpt the area for better shape and contour to the treatment site. "The most common areas performed are the stomach, thighs, male chest area and arms."

How long the results last

While liposuction will give longer lasting results in terms of volume reduction, Dr. Ahli claims that it will not give a permanent result in terms of skin tightening and cellulite. And while it is true that the fat cells removed from a person's body will not grow back, the results will ultimately also depend on your lifestyle and personal ageing process. "Unfortunately, we cannot halt the ageing process, so the appearance of the skin and the contour may change and the patient may run the risk of ruining the shape and definition that liposuction can give." Therefore gaining large amounts of weight after liposuction can lead to unpleasant results with some patients claiming that they can't tell the difference between their body before surgery and their body after surgery.

BREAST AUGMENTATION

Overview

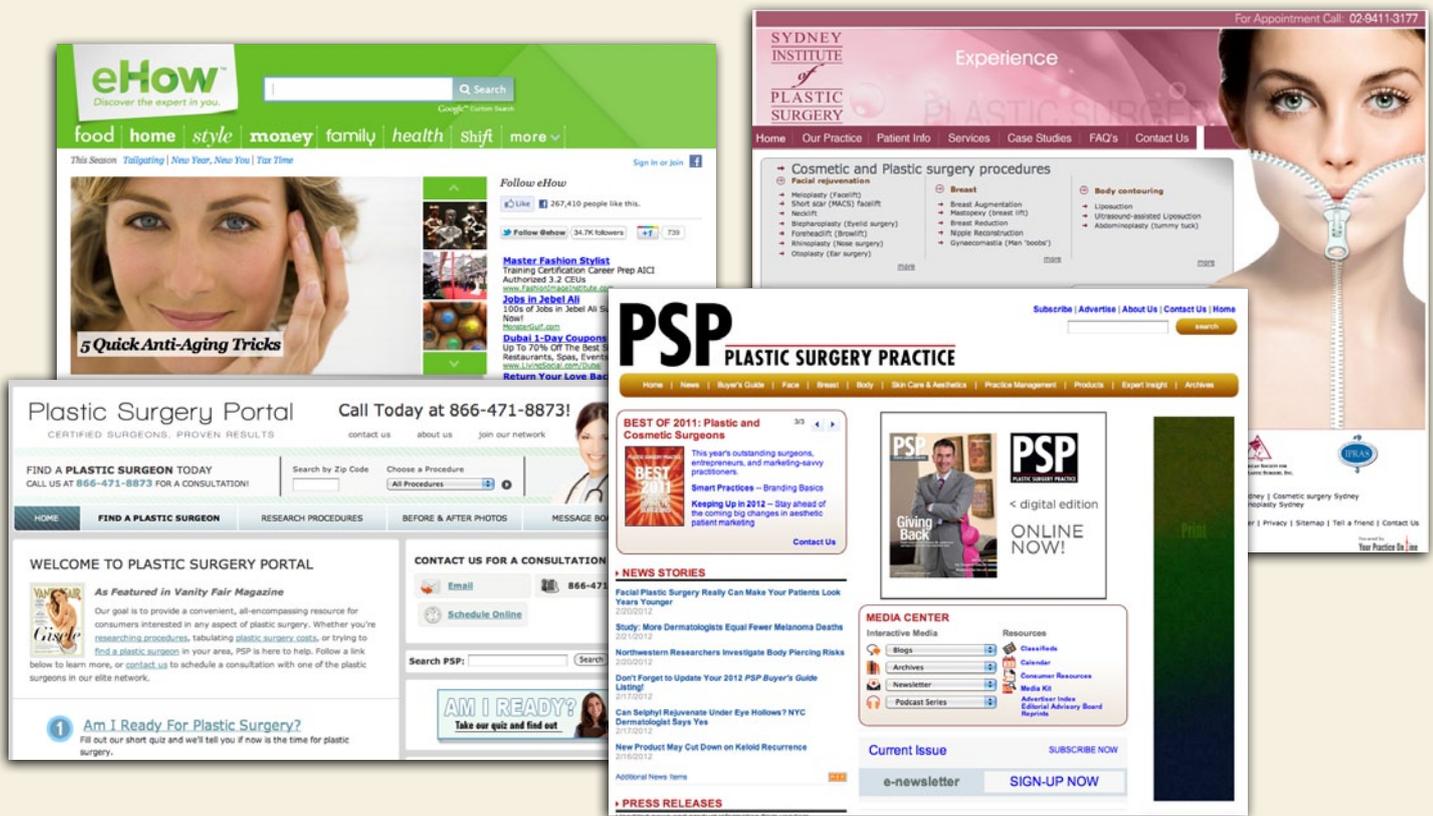
Essentially breast augmentation is used to make the breasts bigger and firmer and to give volume, says Dr. Ahli. "This is indicated in individuals with small breasts, sagging breasts, especially after lactation or weight loss, or individuals with an asymmetrical breast shape." The technique involves making a small incision generally under the natural fold of the breast in which a silicone implant is inserted and the implant is moulded into place. "Once the surgeon is satisfied with the appearance of the implant, the incision will be closed," he says.

How long the results last

The results of breast augmentation, suggest Dr. Ahli, are lifelong, so long as there is no rupture of the implant which is three percent during 10 years. A 'guess estimate' for the product life is 15 to 20 years, according to the *Institute of Medicine* and there are actually a number of reasons breast implants fail and have to be replaced. Surprisingly, the most common reasons for a quick implant leak has little to do with the patient and more to do with the plastic surgeon. While the implant itself may also be damaged during the initial surgery, overfilling or under-filling is common and causes the implants' shape to change, making it more prone to leakage. Similarly, implants that are the wrong size can cause rippling and wrinkling. It's vitally important to choose a reputable, board-certified plastic surgeon with experience in breast augmentation before getting operated on, or you may risk having to have your breast implants replaced sooner than you expect.







TUMMY TUCK

Overview

A full tummy tuck is usually performed under general anaesthesia and involves surgically removing excess skin and fat from the middle and lower part of the abdomen and sometimes tightening the abdominal muscles. The result is a flatter abdomen, and sometimes, a smaller waist, because the procedure corrects loose, sagging skin and excess fat, says Dr. Ahli. Individuals with loose skin, stretch marks, fatty tummy with skin laxity, post pregnancy or loose skin leftover post weight loss or bariatric surgery are ideal candidates for this procedure. "However obese patients or individuals with diabetes, heavy smokers, those with a tendency to scar, or those with unrealistic expectations, or even patients who are planning to become pregnant soon are not good candidates for this operation," he warns.

How long the results last

Dr. Ahli explains that a tummy tuck will give a longer lasting result in terms of volume reduction and harmonious contour with a permanent result of skin tightening and cellulite reduction. "However the length of time that the benefits last depends greatly on the individual's behaviour - if he/she reverts back to bad habits such as overeating and/or not exercising, the patient may run the risk of ruining the shape and definition that a tummy tuck can give," he says, therefore as long as the person maintains a healthy lifestyle, the results will be longer lasting. It also vital

to understand that every individual's body is different when it comes to the location of fat storage. If you fail to make changes in your diet, your body may eventually start storing fat in the same location as before, rendering your surgery redundant.

Useful Websites

- www.plasticsurgerypractice.com
- www.sydneyplasticsurgery.org
- www.ehow.com
- www.plasticsurgeryportal.com

Expert Profile



Dr. Qassim Ahli, Consultant Plastic Surgeon at Dubai's *Dermalase Clinic* is also Head of the Plastic Surgery Unit in *Sheikh Rashid Hospital*. A board certified medical doctor, he has over 12 years of experience in conducting aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgery.



Dr. Firas A. Hamdan, double board certified Cosmetic Surgeon at *Cosmetic Surgery Clinic*. He received his medical degree from *American University* of Beirut and is also a founding Member of the *World Academy of Cosmetic Surgery*.



Dr. Ahmed Ghanem is a consultant plastic surgeon who practices at *Crescent Medical Center* and *Al Garhoud Private Hospital*. He has been in this field since 1980 and has practiced in Egypt, UK, and in The Gulf. This vast experience has helped Dr. Ghanem to master most of the modern plastic and aesthetic surgery procedures available today.