



before



after

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PLASTIC SURGERY: A STARTLING TREND

Plastic surgery is a manifestation of a startling trend. Little more than a decade ago, a mere handful of "aesthetic" cosmetic surgeons were operating in Britain. There are now about 300, and the number of people - men and women submitting to the knife, laser and fat suction hose has soared to 65,000 a year. Some surgeons say demand has tripled in three years, and many customers of building societies turned banks are deciding to spend their windfalls in the operating theatre.

The explanation does not lie in affluence alone. In an age of ever more youthful icons, some middle-aged people are anxious to halt ageing out of fear for their careers. Others say looking good simply makes them feel better. Thus it would seem that cosmetic surgery is a healthy sign of progress in the pursuit of self-esteem.

Advances in plastic surgery have made the prospect less daunting. The techniques are becoming less invasive, accelerating recovery and making it more likely that the price of such operations will fall. Keyhole surgery is more discreet; lasers



before



after

Dr. Sach's 15 minute nose operation can add refinement to any face.

improve skin texture; ultrasound fragments fat cells before they are sucked out; a product to inhibit the growth of scar tissue is in the final stages of development.

Michael Sachs, a prominent New York Plastic Surgeon, can reshape a nose in 15 minutes and has turned out more than 30,000 of them. His facelifts take 2 1/2 hours, and he prefers to use sedatives rather than general anesthetic whenever possible. This helped to persuade Maureen Ingram, a 49-year-old beauty salon proprietor from Lincoln, that he was the doctor for her.

"I was polishing a glass table when I saw my reflection and realized that everything was hanging forward. The ears were trying to pass the nose," she said. "It suddenly hit me that the time had come for a facelift. I was 47 and wanted to stop the ageing process.

Two days after a £10,000 operation to lift her face, augment her lips, and smooth her eyelids, she went shopping. Thirteen days later she was back to work. "A lot of my clients have had surgery. They are people who want to put the brakes on. It is not a quest for glamour, it is about self-respect. I feel much more confident now that my face is not automatically falling south."

Her photographer husband, Neil Ingram, was so impressed that he flew to New York for a facelift and new nose of his own. The cost was equivalent to that of a Ford Fiesta, he says; the benefit is

that he looks perhaps 41 years. "The tricky thing about life is that you get older but you don't feel any different. Now I look like I feel. I can wear jeans and a T-shirt without looking like an old wrinkly. It is a great psychological boost."

Increasing specialization by surgeons should ensure more consistent quality in future and more advanced techniques are being developed all the time. Already the use of laboratory-grown skin is widespread for burn patients, and the idea of "spare parts" surgery, using laboratory-grown body parts, is no longer the stuff of science fiction.

CHEQUE-LIST FOR A BETTER BODY

The most popular cosmetic surgery operations chosen by 65,000 people a year, of whom 97% are women.

- FACELIFT**
Cut around hairline and tightening of facial skin. Keyhole method also available
£9,000-£11,000
- FROWN LINE PREVENTION**
Stops lines deepening by paralysing expressive muscles.
£1,500
- NOSE JOB**
Paring down cartilage and sometimes bone beneath peeled-back skin, which is then re-stitched
£4,000-£5,000
- KNEE SLIMMING**
Fat sucked from around kneecaps to eliminate pudgy, ill-defined look
£2,000
- SKIN PLUMPING**
New agents fill in unsightly facial dents and hollows
£1,500
- BREAST SURGERY**
Lifts sagging breasts, remodels nipples and inserts breast implants
£3,000-£4,000
- LIPOSUCTION**
To remove fat from bottom, thighs and stomach by ultrasound and suction techniques
£1,500