

Faced with Decisions

Lets face it - aging is a part of life. Classic symptoms of the facial aging process include the skin becoming less resilient and more prone to drooping, wrinkles starting to appear under and around the eyes and lines around the lips.

Cosmetic surgery is becoming more widely accepted than ever, thanks in part to the deluge of reality television shows and also a more educated public.

Figures provided by the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery revealing an increase in procedures of 119% between 1997 and 1999. Australia is following this trend with cosmetic procedures becoming more common and widely accepted.

"It is very understandable that with the wide range of procedures currently featured in magazines and seen on television, that a person considering plastic surgery, particularly facial rejuvenation might find the choices confusing," Warners Bay Cosmetic Plastic Surgeon, Dr John Newton said.

Options range from simple and minimally invasive procedures such as Restylane or Botox injections, through to the most complex and extensive face and brow lifting procedures. Although this wide choice can give the patient an array of options, it also makes decisions complex and challenging.

"The first question I ask a patient is what bothers them about their appearance. Depending on their answer I can then advise them if a structural or superficial procedure will provide the desired outcome," Dr Newton said.

Structural procedures

If a person is mainly concerned about things like excess skin, heavier lines on the middle of the face and sagging of the cheeks or eyebrows, then realistically they are looking to consider major structural change to restore a more youthful impression.

The most common surgical procedures include face, brow and cheek lifts. A significant change such as this generally requires a major operation.

A facelift involves lifting the skin, moving and securing underlying connective tissue, removing excess fat and skin, re-draping the skin, and then suturing the incisions. The result is smoother skin on the face with more definition in the neck and jaw line.

Some other examples of major facial cosmetic procedures include rhinoplasty (nasal surgery) and eyelid surgery. Eyelid surgery can be a complex procedure particularly if there is excess fat to be removed, but it can dramatically improve the appearance of the upper and lower lids.

A revolutionary new technique called a FeatherLift Face-lift is now offering great results to help slow the process of aging, in a fraction of the time needed for traditional surgery. The procedure is minimally invasive and can be performed under local anaesthetic, resulting in faster recovery.

Using a needle, specially designed threads are inserted into the subcutaneous fat, at a required depth, along pre-determined contours. The threads help lift, contour and suspend the sagging tissues of the face.

The procedure is suitable for patients with mild and moderate sagging of the face and neck, premature aging and weakly pronounced aesthetic contours.

The procedure was developed five years ago in Russia, so far results have been promising.

Dr Newton has already performed this revolutionary procedure right here in the Hunter.

Superficial procedures

Minor procedures such as Botox injections and chemical peels can provide subtle results to restore a fresh appearance.

However, resurfacing techniques are more complex than commonly believed. The most common resurfacing technique, lasering, can take up to 14 days to heal and can be a major procedure for some patients. Chemical peels and dermabrasions also take two weeks for the skin to recover.

The injection of Botox is very useful for minimising lines on the face but requires repeated injections to maintain effect.

Maintaining your new look

In order to maintain and make the most of your new looks it helps to follow simple rules like always using sunscreen and not smoking. Regular visits to a beauty therapist also contribute substantially to maintenance.

What is right for you?

“The decision about what procedure should be performed for an individual patient depends largely on the changes they will feel comfortable with. Many patients consider combining a number of procedures and in these circumstances in particular it is always important to be aware of the risks involved,” Dr Newton said.

“I believe it is best to complete procedures that produce significant structural change first and leave resurfacing or superficial procedures to a later date. This allows the effect of one procedure to be achieved and assessed before proceeding,” he said.

Dr Newton stressed that anyone considering any kind of plastic surgery, should consult a accredited plastic surgeon and discuss their expectations about looking and feeling better, keeping in mind that the desired result is improvement, not perfection.

“Emotional stability is also an important factor. Plastic surgery can renew your self-confidence and improve your appearance, but the rest is up to you,” he said.

It is also important to ensure that your surgeon is fully qualified and experienced to offer you the best possible results.

Plastic surgeons accredited by The Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons must train for over eight years to be qualified to practice their specialty. Further information about procedures and qualified plastic surgeons is available at the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons' website www.plasticsurgery.org.au. Their telephone number for direct enquiry is 02 9437 9200.

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