

# How To Choose a Cosmetic Surgeon

By Mike Dunn

For whatever reason or reasons you are considering cosmetic surgery -- to improve your appearance or for medical purposes -- it is wise to do your homework. There is plenty of help available these days for someone seeking information about surgeons and procedures. Take advantage of the resources at your disposal. You want to hire a surgeon with the skill and training and experience to handle your procedure professionally and without complications. There is no reason why this can't be accomplished if you take your time and make a systematic evaluation.

Your goals are to obtain as much information as you can about the procedure, carefully evaluate the credentials of the physician, and thoroughly discuss your questions and expectations before you proceed.

First, check the paper for a well-respected cosmetic surgeon. Then check for personal recommendations. If you have family members or friends who have already undergone the type of cosmetic surgery you have in mind, their input will be invaluable. What was their experience? Did the procedure go as planned? How would they grade their surgeon in everything from professionalism to friendliness? Was the surgeon there to support them or talk to them before and after the operation?

If you don't have friends or family members who have undergone similar procedures, don't fret. There are professional referrals available from doctors or through organizations such as the American Board of Plastic Surgery and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. You can also search for information online or arrange to speak with a consultant. There are lots of viable options.

Once you have the names of some doctors who you are considering, do background checks. With a little effort, you can verify such things as board certification, license status and/or malpractice claim history. The American Medical Association (AMA) or your state medical board will supply you with the medical school attended, the kind of training received, and certifications (but not disciplinary action) of a doctor at no charge. You can also verify board certification through the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) online at [www.certifieddoctor.com](http://www.certifieddoctor.com), or by calling 1-866-ASK-ABMS.

For a small fee, you can visit your local courthouse and research any claims or actions taken against a particular physician. The Federation of Medical Specialty Boards (FMSB) oversees all

of the United States medical boards, and collects data on board actions taken against physicians that are certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

Now that you've done your background checks, the next step is to speak with the doctors (notice that is plural). As with any surgical procedure it is always recommended to get more than one opinion. Be sure to ask them for patient referrals so that you can speak with someone who has been through the procedure already. The aforementioned American Society of Plastic Surgeons recommends asking the following questions during this evaluation phase:

- Are you certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery?
- Do you have hospital privileges to perform this surgery? If so, at which hospitals?
- How many procedures of this type have you performed?
- Where and how will you perform my surgery?
- Is the surgical facility accredited or in the process of being accredited by a national or state-recognized accrediting organization?
- What are the risks involved with my procedure?
- How long of a recovery period can I expect, and what kind of help will I need during my recovery?
- Will I need to take time off work? If so, how long?
- How much will my procedure cost? Are financing options available?

After the interviewing process, weigh all the factors together and make an informed, confident decision. Eliminate anyone who isn't board certified or who doesn't have sufficient experience. If all of the surgeons you've interviewed are board certified and have supplied you with patient referrals and have a similar amount of experience, then follow your gut and go with the one who you feel the most comfortable with. You've done your homework, you've evaluated the essential criteria, and now you can feel good about your choice.