

Recommendations for patients considering Surgical Cosmetic procedures.

Irish Association of Plastic Surgeons

**Chief Medical Officer,
Department of Health**

Following ongoing concerns expressed in relation to the safety and quality of surgical cosmetic procedures both in Ireland and abroad, this guidance has been developed in partnership between the Irish Association of Plastic Surgeons and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer as an update to the guidance previously issued by the CMO in November 2010, 'Advice to Cosmetic Surgery Tourists'.

Cosmetic surgery and non-surgical cosmetic treatments are regularly sought by Irish patients either in Ireland or overseas. All surgery contains a certain element of risk and patients should seek to inform themselves of both the risks and benefits of any procedures before making a decision to proceed.

These procedures are not generally available within the public health system and it can be difficult for patients to know which practitioner or what procedures are safe or appropriate for them. Patients are often reluctant to approach their GPs for advice in this area and are vulnerable to advertising which may be misleading. They can find it difficult to choose a properly trained surgeon, who can safely perform their surgery in an appropriate facility.

The following are recommendations for patients seeking cosmetic procedures:

1. You should carefully consider the effects you are seeking and research the procedures available prior to a consultation
2. If possible, you should seek advice from your General Practitioner (GP) to ensure that you are a suitable candidate for the procedure in question. Your GP will have knowledge of reputable specialist practitioners in your area and can give you impartial advice about choosing a practitioner. Furthermore, your GP can help you to interpret any claims that are made in advertisements.
3. If you have a medical condition, allergy or are taking medications your GP will have important information which should be passed to the surgeon.
4. Have a consultation with an appropriately registered plastic surgeon. In Ireland, this can be checked by asking for the Medical Council number of your surgeon and examining the online register of medical practitioners (www.medicalcouncil.ie) Ensure that they are registered on the Specialist register of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic surgery with the Irish Medical Council (www.medicalcouncil.ie). Ask your surgeon if he or she is a full member of the Irish Association of Plastic surgeons, all of whom have had full specialist training. (www.plasticsurgery.ie)

5. If you are considering a cosmetic procedure from a provider outside of Ireland, it is highly recommended that you check with the regulatory authority for medical practitioners in the country to which you intend to travel to confirm that the medical practitioner who will be performing the procedure is appropriately registered in that country.
Further information and advice can be obtained from the International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities at www.iamra.com
6. Consultations should be with the plastic surgeon who will do your procedure and not with a representative from the clinic. Be comfortable with your choice of surgeon.
7. Ensure that you fully understand the expected outcome from the procedure, which will come from a thorough consultation with your surgeon. Ensure also that you understand potential complications from your procedure.
8. Establish the costs of your procedure and what is included/excluded from these costs. Ensure that you understand what the price of your procedure covers, particularly in terms of aftercare and any revision surgery which may be necessary.
9. You should not choose a service on the basis of price alone. Avoid being tempted by the offer of discounted prices/incentives. An advance deposit to secure a surgery date is discouraged.
10. You should not feel pressured into making a decision to agree to surgery. A cooling-off period of approximately 7 - 14 days between the consultation and surgery is advisable. You should have a second consultation with your surgeon before making a final decision.
11. Prior to any procedure, you should identify what follow-up care and medical support you will need after surgery has been completed and where this care will be provided. Make sure that there are good arrangements for your aftercare both while you are in hospital and following your discharge. Ensure that you know who to contact if you should have any questions or problems.
12. Ensure that you fully understand any agreements or consent forms that you are asked to sign and ensure that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before signing.