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Create a Look You'll Love

The BELLA Guide to COSMETIC PROCEDURES

by Dawn Allcot

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Do you want to feel better about yourself? Do you feel as if your appearance is inhibiting your success in romance, career, or life in general? If so, you're not alone. In 2009, 12.5 million Americans underwent cosmetic surgery procedures. In an online survey of 2,148 adults, conducted by Harris Interactive, 69 percent of Americans would consider a cosmetic procedure if money were not an issue.

Dr. John W. Decorato, a board certified surgeon on Staten Island specializing in cosmetic surgery procedures, really considers himself to be a "confidence" doctor. That's because although he administers Botox treatments, and specializes in tummy

tucks, rhinoplasty, breast augmentation, among other things, his practice goes way beyond enhancing physical beauty. "Some people perceive – whether or not other people see it – some issue with their appearance that tempers their confidence in themselves," he explains. "By correcting, adjusting, or altering the feature they have an issue with, they gain the confidence to achieve success in many areas of life."

If you're considering cosmetic procedures or cosmetic surgery, your choice of cosmetic surgeon is an important one, but Dr. Decorato warns it could be a "buyer beware" experience. For one thing, there is no board certification for cosmetic

surgeons specifically. Dr. Decorato explains: "The American Board of Plastic Surgery is one of a number of boards that certify physicians, but it encompasses both cosmetic surgery and reconstructive surgery – two very different practices."

When you're "shopping" for a cosmetic surgeon, says Dr. Decorato, ask about their training and their background. Licensing says very little, since most medical licenses are very broad. "My New York State license simply says I'm licensed in the state of New York to perform medicine," Dr. Decorato says.

That piece of paper doesn't tell the whole story at all. In fact, Dr. Decorato completed

residency training specifically in Plastic Surgery through the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He's a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, the New York Regional Society of Plastic Surgeons and the Northeastern Society of Plastic Surgeons.

Dr. Decorato boasts credentials to perform surgeries in Staten Island area hospitals – another important consideration when selecting a cosmetic surgeon, he says. "Pay attention to credentials," he advises. "If a surgeon is doing the procedures in a hospital, they must have hospital credentials." This is like another person – or an

organization, more accurately – “vouching” for the doctor’s competency and skill.

On the other hand, it’s only recently in New York State that surgeons’ offices must be inspected and accredited. When he’s not working out of area hospitals, Dr. Decorato performs surgeries in Staten Island’s first ambulatory surgery center for plastic surgery, The Aesthetic Pavilion Ambulatory Surgery Center. The facility is accredited and certified by the American Association for the Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Centers and meets all national standards for plastic surgery procedures.

If you’re not having a procedure done in a hospital and it requires general anesthesia, ask about the anesthesiologist, too. Dr. Decorato emphasizes that general anesthesia always involves some additional risks. It also lengthens recovery times, an important consideration when busy women (and

men) need to get back to work, take care of children, and otherwise get on with their lives. Today’s cosmetic surgery patients want to look good and feel good about themselves, but also return to everyday life as fast as possible.

That’s just one reason Dr. Decorato recommends the groundbreaking “Smart Lipo” procedure, an outpatient procedure that requires just a few hours of recovery time but delivers similar results to full-fledged liposuction surgery. Dr. Decorato was one of the first surgeons to perform this minimally invasive fat removal procedure, which he describes as “laser body sculpting.”

The Smart Lipo procedure takes between 45 minutes and two hours, depending on the

body parts being treated, and, because fat is liquified and then removed through a very small incision, it may not even require stitches.

If you’re ready to change the shape of your body or some other feature about yourself for increased confidence, there are plenty of options available. Today’s laser-focused procedures are safer than ever before, with shorter recovery times, but that doesn’t mean you should rush into this potentially life-changing decision.

Dr. Decorato urges those considering cosmetic surgery procedures to ask themselves: Who are you doing this for? “The best candidates for any cosmetic procedure are self-motivated individuals – not people who feel as if they’ve been pushed into it by friends, family, or even their spouse,” he says.

So are you ready to do something for yourself? If you truly feel you could benefit from the boost in self-confidence that cosmetic surgery may provide, take a look at the top 10 cosmetic procedures and cosmetic surgery options on the following page and then utilize the checklist of questions in the sidebar when you’re interviewing potential surgeons.

Keep in mind, any surgeon is licensed to perform cosmetic surgery, but that doesn’t mean all are qualified, says Dr. Decorato. Ask these questions when you are selecting a cosmetic surgeon in order to ensure you find a qualified doctor who is right for you.

- Where did you study?
- What certifications do you hold?
- What procedures do you specialize in? (You want to make sure your surgeon is experienced in performing the procedure or surgery you want).
- How long have you been doing these procedures?
- Are you certified to work in an accredited hospital? What procedures or surgeries are you accredited to perform there?
- Where do you perform procedures?
- If procedures are done in-office, is your office accredited for this particular procedure?
- If anesthesia is required, who will be the anesthesiologists? What certifications/accreditations do they hold?
- Can I see before/after samples of your work?
- What does the procedure entail?
- What side effects are associated with this procedure, and how would they be treated or handled?
- What pain management techniques are employed? Is a hospital stay required?

Do you feel as if your appearance is inhibiting your success in romance, career, or life in general? If so, you’re not alone.



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Cosmetic Procedures Guide

PROCEDURE	WHAT IT CAN ACHIEVE	COST*	WHAT IT ENTAILS	HOW IT'S DONE
Botox	Botox can make you look younger by reducing wrinkles in the forehead, around the mouth (laugh lines), and around the eyes (crow's feet). As lines disappear, you'll have a softer, more youthful appearance temporarily.	Starting at \$300	Botox is an injection of a protein designed to weaken muscles that create active wrinkles. The procedure can take up to 15 minutes in a cosmetic surgeon's office.	This in-office procedure consists of injections to the facial muscles.
Liposuction	Have a firm tight body like when you were younger. Slim down in common "problem areas," such as the neck (double chin), belly, thighs, and arms.	Starting at \$2,500	Liposuction removes fat cells in common problem areas to tighten and contour the body. The procedure is localized and can be performed virtually anywhere, from the ankles to the neck.	There are a number of different types of liposuction, all performed under local anesthesia, sometimes under mild sedation. A very small puncture is made in order to "vacuum" fat from beneath the skin above the muscle layers. Some liposuction involves lasers, some forms are suction-assisted, and others are ultrasound assisted.
Breast Augmentation	Get the size and shape breasts you want. Fight the aging signs of drooping, saggy breasts with implants that offer lift, or make your waist look smaller with a larger bust.	Approximately \$4,000 +	Outpatient surgery without a hospital stay.	Under local or general anesthesia, silicone or saline implants will be placed in the breasts through an incision under the arm, under the breast, or through an incision near the nipple.
EyeLid Surgery (Blepharoplasty)	Look noticeably younger when excess skin around the upper eyelids is tightened or removed, and puffy eyelids virtually vanish so the cheeks and lash line have a seamless look.	Approximately \$3,000 +	Local anesthesia and mild sedation.	The surgeon makes small incisions as close as possible to the natural folds of the eye. Excess fat, muscle, and loose skin are removed. During lower eyelid surgery, the incision will be made along the lash line and smile creases of the lower lid. Very fine sutures are used to minimize scars.
Nose Job (Rhinoplasty)	Change the entire look of your face with very minor changes to your nose. Make your nose smaller, narrower, or reshape the tip.	Starting at \$2,500	Local or general anesthesia and mild sedation, no hospital stay.	This surgery, which typically takes about one or two hours, can involve an incision across the bottom of your nose between your nostrils or in the lining of your nostrils. The surgeon will remove or rearrange cartilage, or break and rearrange the bone to change the shape of the nose. The nose may be packed with gauze and, if it was broken, splinted or casted.
Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)	Rejuvenate the abdomen to return your body to its pre-pregnancy or more youthful state.	\$5,000 +	General anesthesia, surgery.	An incision is made just below the bikini line, sometimes from hip to hip. A tummy tuck is actually two surgeries in one. First, the doctor tightens the muscles, often removing fat cells as well. Then, excess skin is removed. The size of the scar depends on how much extra skin must be removed; some scars can be very small.
Injectable (Soft Tissue) Fillers	Achieve a younger face and youthful glow by filling in lines.	Approximately \$500 and up	In-office facial or lip injections of collagen or other fillers to contour the face or lips to achieve the youthful look you want.	The cosmetic surgeon will map out the precise look you want and inject the soft tissue of the face with fillers to achieve that look.
Laser Hair Removal	Permanent body hair removal in about 80 percent of patients – no more shaving or waxing.	Less than \$500 (for the entire series)	Laser hair removal requires multiple visits in order to destroy hair follicles. In many cases, hair removal is permanent. Some patients may return for annual treatments.	An invisible beam of light and constant heat source penetrate each hair follicle to destroy it at its root while preserving the surrounding skin.
Microdermabrasion	Remove fine lines and crow's feet to look younger quickly and relatively inexpensively (compared to other anti-aging procedures). This procedure also gives the skin a healthy, younger-looking glow.	Less than \$500 (for the entire series)	Treatments are completed in a series of up to 10, spaced out weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. No anesthesia is required.	A deep exfoliation procedure, this cosmetic procedure is virtually painless and performed in a physician's office.
Laser Resurfacing	Tighten and refresh the skin, reduce acne scarring and wrinkles, and reduce pigmentation issues.	\$500 and up	This outpatient procedure is done in your physician's office with mild oral sedatives and topical anesthetic cream to numb the skin during treatment.	Using light and heat, a laser creates a controlled burn to the skin to eliminate surface irregularities, acne scars, and reduce the appearance of sun damage.
Breast Reduction	Create smaller or more evenly shaped breasts to improve your physical look and also your comfort; the procedure can alleviate back pain associated with large breasts	\$8,000+	Surgery performed under general anesthesia; a one day hospital stay may be required, although it's usually not.	Incisions are made in the breasts so the surgeon can remove excess breast tissue, fat, and skin. The nipple and areola will be moved to a higher position while still remaining attached to underlying tissue to maintain sensation and breasts are reshaped. Often, the size of the areola is also reduced.

* Pricing is based on averages and varies widely depending on the extent of the damage being treated, how much of the area is being treated, and a number of other factors.

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Cosmetic Procedures Guide

RECOVERY TIME	THINGS TO KNOW	LITTLE-KNOWN FACT
About an hour for the medicine to absorb.	There are two types of wrinkles: active wrinkles, created by muscles pulling on the skin, and static wrinkles related to sun damage, how you take care of your skin, environmental factors, and heredity. Botox can temporarily reduce active wrinkles by weakening the muscles that cause those wrinkles. The effects last approximately three months.	You may not notice the effects of Botox for several days.
Return to work in five to seven days, return to full activity in two to three weeks (engaging in intense physical activity any sooner could cause swelling).	Liposuction, also called lipoplasty, is a body-contouring procedure, not weight loss surgery. The effects will be permanent in that area, since fat cells are removed. But without good diet and exercise habits, fat will settle in other areas of the body. It is one of the most popular forms of cosmetic surgery.	People actually lose very little weight from liposuction. It is designed to tighten and tone, not to help you lose those last 10 pounds. Dr. Decarato calls liposuction a form of "body sculpting with fat."
From one to two weeks, depending on the individual.	Breast augmentation surgery is a very individualized procedure. Look at pictures of people with a similar body shape to yours, and discuss with your doctor the effect you hope to achieve with implants.	Implants don't come in cup sizes; they're actually measured by volume and customized to the patient. Dr. Decarato says, "You would need completely different implants to achieve C-cup breasts on someone who's 5'3" and 115 pounds than someone who's 5'10" and 140 pounds."
Vision may be blurred for several days. Bruising and puffiness, which is difficult to cover up, may last slightly longer.	Eyelid surgery can create a dramatic difference in the way people perceive you in business and social situations. While recovery time may be a bit longer than some other cosmetic procedures, the effects are permanent.	Eyelid surgery is one of the most common cosmetic surgery procedures. "The first thing people notice about you is your eyes. If your puffy eyes make you look tired, it's a detriment to your appearance," Dr. Decarato says.
Seven to 10 days	Nasal surgery is especially popular among younger patients. Your nose is in the center of your face, and very small changes in your nose can make a dramatic change in the appearance of your whole face. Consider the end result of how you would like to look when you discuss your upcoming surgery with your doctor. Following surgery, your nose will gradually (over the course of a year) gain more definition to achieve the look you want.	Rhinoplasty is a very customized and individualized surgery. Before you choose a cosmetic surgeon, view before and after surgery photos of his patients. You don't want to select someone who gives everyone the same nose. Rhinoplasty is the cosmetic surgery with the highest rate of revision requests.
Two to four weeks or longer	Tummy tuck surgery works best on patients whose weight is stable and simply have that one problem "pooch," usually from childbirth.	A tummy tuck is not a weight-loss procedure but a body-contouring procedure.
A few hours in most cases. Bruising may occur so limit medications and supplements that can cause bruising.	For best results, find a cosmetic surgeon with extensive experience and samples of his work since this procedure's success hinges on the physician's technique. You want to look rejuvenated, not "puffy."	Older skin doesn't sag so much as it "deflates," and this loss of soft tissue and drooping of the skin causes wrinkles. Filler injections are a sculpting procedure to return the face to its former shape.
The skin may be sore or sensitive for a few hours; cooling gel or other cooling methods are used during the procedure to minimize irritation.	The success and comfort of your laser treatment depend on the experience and technique of the physician. Laser hair removal may not be effective on people with dark or tanned skin or people with red or blonde hair because the laser is attracted to the hair because of its darkness against the skin.	Hairs grow at different rates; that's why multiple visits are required for positive results. In between treatments, it's safe to shave the remaining hairs.
None, although skin may be sensitive and red for a day following the procedure.	Microdermabrasion will not get rid of acne scars or deep wrinkles and the results are temporary. Dr. Decarato notes, "Patients should know that the less recovery time required for a cosmetic procedure, the less permanent the results of the treatment."	Microdermabrasion treatments are on the rise for men as well as women.
Depending on the skin problem: being treated, recovery time can be from one to three days. "The more dramatic the effect of the cosmetic procedure, the more recovery time is required," says Dr. Decarato.	Laser resurfacing is on the rise, as many patients are selecting this laser treatment over chemical peel procedures. Laser resurfacing is effective at treating pigmentation issues caused by sun damage, wrinkles, and acne scars. It's critical to use sunscreen and protect the face from sun exposure following laser resurfacing treatment, since the "new," fresh, young skin that has been revealed is more sensitive to sun damage.	Sun damage is the number one cause of facial wrinkles.
Total healing can take months, but patients return to work after one to two weeks	Breast reduction surgery should be done after the breasts are fully developed, and preferably after child-bearing years: since pregnancy and breastfeeding can alter the size and shape of breasts. If done prior to pregnancy and childbirth, breast reduction may hinder a woman's ability to breastfeed.	Some insurance may cover breast reduction surgery if your doctor provides a medical reason for the surgery.