

MEDIA RESOURCE FOLDER

(Updated 15 February 2016)

What is the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS)?

Founded in 1970, the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons Inc. (ASPS) is the peak body for Specialist Plastic Surgeons (both reconstructive and cosmetic).

Our main role is to protect the integrity of plastic surgery as a specialty.

Our mission is to provide the highest quality plastic surgery care to all Australians by:

- Facilitating government accredited surgical education and training for all Specialist Plastic Surgeons;
- Upholding ethical and professional standards;
- Promoting public education about reconstructive and cosmetic plastic surgery procedures.

Membership criteria are stringent. All ASPS members hold a specialist qualification from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) which is the only College for Specialist Plastic Surgery training which is accredited by both Australian and New Zealand Governments through the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and New Zealand Medical Council (NZMC), respectively.

Members of ASPS have undertaken a minimum of 5 years of specialist post-graduate training, and are Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS).

The purpose of this resource folder

The purpose of this resource folder is to provide you with:

- Help with identifying what is fact and what is fiction when it comes to cosmetic and reconstructive surgery;
- Some handy hints on the use of titles when referring to different types of practitioners practicing in the field of cosmetic and reconstructive surgery;
- Ready access to the answers of some of the most common questions directed to ASPS;
- Information on individual procedures.

These materials are designed to be used in conjunction with the resources available on the ASPS Website at www.plasticsurgery.org.au

COSMETIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY – FACTS AND MYTHS

FACT: In Australia it is legal for doctors without formal specialist surgical training to conduct cosmetic or plastic surgery if the patient agrees to the operation

Currently, in Australia, it is legal for a medical practitioner with only a basic medical degree (i.e. MBBS - Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) to perform surgery.

ASPS members are **Specialist Plastic Surgeons** with extensive post graduate specialist training in all aspects of cosmetic and reconstructive surgery.

ASPS members are Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS) and have undergone extensive training to perform invasive surgical procedures. The Australian Medical Council (AMC) accredits the post-graduate five-year specialist training program delivered by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

To check whether your doctor or surgeon has an AMC accredited specialist plastic surgery qualification, call the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) on 1300 367 446 or www.plasticsurgery.org.au

MYTH: All plastic surgery procedures are performed in accredited facilities

In Australia, invasive surgical procedures are sometimes performed in a facility, such as an office or consulting room, which is not fully accredited or monitored for the performance of those procedures. To ensure patient safety, the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons advocates that all invasive surgical procedures, that require more than a minimal amount of local anaesthetic, must be conducted in an accredited day surgery or private or public hospital. While all surgery carries risk, the accreditation of facilities will provide:

- Appropriate anaesthesia;
- Infection control, sterile supply and clinical waste management;
- Minimum quality and audit requirements (e.g. medicines checked they have not reached their used by dates and are kept at the right temperatures);
- Credentialing of clinical staff;
- Building and facility issues (e.g. the resuscitation equipment works).

FACT: All surgery, cosmetic and reconstructive, whether performed under local or general anaesthetic, in day surgeries or in hospitals, can carry serious risk

With a rise in the number of Australians undergoing cosmetic procedures, cosmetic surgery has become 'normalised' and accepted as common place, however, cosmetic surgery is like any other kind of surgery in that it carries serious risk and therefore needs to be seriously considered. In some circumstances, a patient can have an adverse reaction to the anaesthetic or be affected by post-operative complications. These problems can occur even when the surgery has been performed with the utmost skill.

MYTH: Plastic surgeons only perform reconstructive surgery

Plastic Surgery encompasses both cosmetic and reconstructive surgery. ASPS members are Specialist Plastic Surgeons trained, experienced, and qualified to perform both cosmetic and reconstructive procedures. Many cosmetic procedures are embedded in the training undertaken for reconstructive plastic surgery. Specialist Plastic Surgeons are uniquely qualified to handle the demands and risks attached to various cosmetic surgery procedures.

FACT: In Australia there is limited regulation or standardisation when it comes to the use of titles to describe qualifications in the area of cosmetic surgery

Prospective patients can become confused by the range and description of medical qualifications. Given the high level of trust Australians put in the medical profession, prospective patients are vulnerable and potentially at risk from those practitioners who operate outside their skill and training level.

ASPS supports the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registration and use of titles. ASPS members are entitled to use the protected title “**Specialist Plastic Surgeon**”.

The Society advocates for transparent information for consumers about education, qualification and the accreditation of premises.

MYTH: That cosmetic surgery advertising is highly regulated

Commercial factors drive advertising. There is a danger that unethical advertising inflates patient expectations while ignoring or trivialising the risks of surgical procedures.

ASPS promotes transparency of information for consumers about education, qualifications and accreditation of premises so that consumers are fully informed.

ASPS’ Code of Practice outlines the professional and ethical standards which are expected from its members.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What’s the difference between cosmetic and reconstructive surgery?

Cosmetic (aesthetic) surgery is one aspect of the broader field of Plastic Surgery. Specialist Plastic Surgery training includes cosmetic surgery and reconstructive surgery.

A ‘cosmetic service’ means an operation, procedure or treatment undertaken for the dominant purpose of improving appearance or improving psychological wellbeing.

Reconstructive surgery is concerned with improving bodily function and performed on abnormal structures of the body caused by, for example, congenital defects, developmental abnormalities, trauma, infection, tumours or disease.

What is the difference between a cosmetic doctor and a plastic surgeon?

In Australia, a **Specialist Plastic Surgeon** has completed his basic medical degree (e.g. MBBS) plus a further post-graduate five year training program delivered by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and accredited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC). Specialist Plastic Surgeons are Fellows of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS).

What are the most popular cosmetic surgery procedures undertaken in Australia?

Reliable national statistics for cosmetic procedures are not collected at this time. This is partly due to the fact that cosmetic surgery is both elective and not covered by Medicare. The other contributing factor is that many different practitioners perform invasive and non invasive cosmetic procedures.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a growing interest by consumers in cosmetic procedures.

How many men are undertaking cosmetic surgery and what are the most common procedures?

Reliable national statistics for cosmetic procedures, by gender, are not collected at this time. This is partly due to the fact that cosmetic surgery is elective and not covered by Medicare. The other contributing factor is that many different practitioners perform invasive and non invasive cosmetic procedures.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that both men and women choose cosmetic procedures.

Is cosmetic surgery for brides currently on the rise?

While figures are not officially collected, anecdotally, all types of cosmetic surgery, including those sought out prior to weddings, are on the rise.

It is not advisable to have any major procedure conducted prior to a big event, as recovery time may differ from patient to patient. Surgical procedures should be done many months before a wedding to ensure complete recovery, but injectable treatments can be done closer to the time.

Can you breastfeed after breast augmentation?

Individual cases may vary but generally, mothers can breastfeed after having a breast augmentation. There is no evidence to suggest that the ability to breastfeed is adversely affected by the presence of breast implants, however, some women do experience reduced nipple sensation following breast augmentation surgery, and nipple sensation is an important part of the milk let down reflex.

Will a woman who's had breast reduction surgery be able to breastfeed?

The Specialist Plastic Surgeon will discuss the preservation of breastfeeding potential with the patient choosing breast surgery reduction. Research shows that when compared to a group of women of similar weight, breastfeeding rates are about the same (around 65%), either with breast reduction surgery or without it.

Is it safe to have Botulinum Toxin (commonly referred to as “Botox”) injections during pregnancy or while breastfeeding?

There is a lack of controlled studies into the effects of Botulinum Toxin on pregnant and breastfeeding women, therefore, it is impossible to conclusively say either way whether it is safe. For caution, ASPS recommends avoiding the use of Botulinum Toxin in pregnant women or having treatments while breastfeeding.

Which procedures are most popular with Australians travelling overseas for cosmetic surgery?

We don't know which procedures are most popular with Australians overseas as reliable statistics are not available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that breast augmentation is a popular choice.

Are all overseas surgeons as skilled as Australian surgeons?

Many overseas surgeons are highly skilled. Not everyone who travels to another country for a procedure will experience complications.

What advice do you have for Australians thinking about travelling overseas for cosmetic surgery?

Australians who plan to undertake cosmetic surgery overseas should know who their surgeon is and research their qualifications as well as understanding the level of accreditation of the facility in which the procedure is performed.

Knowing the medical standards of care and quality control requirements in a foreign country and comparing them to those in Australia is another important piece of research before agreeing to overseas surgery.

You should also investigate the standard of implants, devices and products to be used in your surgery and compare these with Australian standards.

Research the person or company promoting the surgery to see if they're medically trained and will accept liability or provide any help if problems arise.

As a minimum you should ensure the post-operative care period is taken seriously and have a back-up plan in case things go wrong.

Can children have cosmetic surgery?

There are many situations where surgery for children is beneficial and clinically indicated for physical and psychological health reasons. A blanket ban on surgery for all children would be a blunt instrument and would not be in the best interests of some children. For any surgeon, the considerations include the best interests of the child, whether the parental consent is informed, whether the child is sufficiently mature, the health of the child and the timing of the procedure and whether it would be better to wait until adulthood.

ASPS encourages its member surgeons to be conservative in their approach when considering surgery in children.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH COSMETIC SURGERY

- Unfavourable scarring
- Bleeding (hematoma)
- Infection
- Fluid accumulation
- Poor wound healing
- Skin loss
- Blood clots
- Numbness or other changes in skin sensation
- Anaesthesia risks
- Skin discoloration and/or prolonged swelling
- Fatty tissue found deep in the skin might die (fat necrosis)
- Major wound separation
- Asymmetry
- Pain, which may persist
- Deep vein thrombosis, cardiac and pulmonary complications
- Possibility of revision surgery
- Suboptimal aesthetic result

For more information related to Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery Procedures please visit the Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery website: