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Cosmetic procedures: Red Flags Not To Ignore

As more and more cosmetic procedures become readily available and mainstream, it seems as if everyone is having something done. However, easy access to treatments and procedures comes with concerns. As captured on the popular TV show “Botched,” things can go very wrong with serious, even life-threatening consequences. Anyone conducting cosmetic procedures can call themselves a “cosmetic surgeon.” However, to be considered a plastic surgeon one must be certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. **Dr. Stanley Poulos, a Board-Certified San Francisco area Plastic Surgeon offers the following red flags not to**

ignore when selecting a plastic surgeon, dermatologist, aesthetician or anyone else you plan to trust your body with.

1. They offer discount coupons.

Discount coupons make sense if you're looking for a haircut or a massage, not for plastic surgery. "Don't bargain shop when it comes to something serious like surgery. You want to make sure you research the average prices and if something seems too steep of a discount, beware;" Dr. Poulos says.

2. The surgeon is not Board-Certified.

Look for credentials, someone who is Board-Certified in plastic surgery by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. If they are they usually have this credential prominently visible in their office and on their website. This means the surgeon has had at least six years of surgical training with two or three years devoted specifically to plastic surgery, has passed rigorous oral and written examinations and has demonstrated safe and ethical surgical practice.

3. They make lofty promises.

Dr. Poulos states that, "Any surgeon that promises to make you look like a celebrity or says he can make you look 30 years younger, is over-promising. A skilled surgeon knows the potential and limitations of surgery and will be clear about this from the start. A good surgeon will want you to look like an improved version of you, not someone else."

4. The surgeon's operating facility is not accredited.

Often plastic surgery is performed in an ambulatory care center or the surgeon's office-based surgical facility. "Either way, "you want to make sure the facility is properly accredited. Accreditation ensures that strict standards are met for proper equipment, safety, surgeon credentials and staffing," stresses Dr. Poulos.

5. They try to "up-sell" potential patients.

An initial consultation with a plastic surgeon should be a collaborative effort in which doctor and patient come to an agreement about which course of treatment is best. It's reasonable for the surgeon to suggest alternative approaches, but that it's worrisome if he/she uses high-pressure tactics. "Your surgeon may suggest consideration of more or different procedures than your initial request but should have sound reasons why this is his/her advice," says Dr. Poulos.

6. The consultation is short and lacks professionalism.

The first visit with a plastic surgeon must be a thorough, get-to-know-you session in which both patient and doctor determine if they can work together. Also trust how the overall consultation experience feels to you. Is the staff friendly and welcoming? Was your phone call handled professionally? Did they follow through on getting your promised information? Are they clear about all costs and how the procedure will go?

7. They've been censured or sued several times.

"Just because a surgeon has faced a malpractice lawsuit doesn't mean they are incompetent. In today's medical climate, even first-rate surgeons are sometimes sued. However, "be wary of a surgeon who has been sued more than a few times or have been censured by the state medical board," says Poulos.

8. They don't provide before and after photos. If you're interested in a procedure, you should see what the physician can do for you. One of the best ways to see the quality of work is to view before and after photos of their actual patients. If they won't show you any, they may not have enough experience, or success in that particular procedure.

9. When to Consider a Different Aesthetic Surgeon

Dr. Poulos says that, "Searching for a cosmetic surgeon is more manageable when you use a clearly defined system to make the choice. Consider all options and weigh them cautiously. If you're consulting with a cosmetic surgeon and any of the above red-flags come up, consider looking for a different surgeon."

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