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ARE YOU PHYSICALLY & MENTALLY A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR COSMETIC SURGERY?



A shot of the perfect pout, sculpted abs, or perky derriere on social media can often make us covetous of popular Insta-stars. However, just because we may *desire* a cosmetic surgery procedure to obtain a more ideal appearance, it does not necessarily mean that we are physically or mentally a good candidate. In 2007, Donda West, mother of rapper, Kanye West, died following a liposuction and breast reduction procedure. Initially labeled a heart attack, it was later determined that West's death was precipitated by a combination of postoperative complications and pre-existing coronary artery disease. Two years later, then-California Governor, Arnold

Schwarzenegger, signed the [Donda West Plastic Surgery Law](#), requiring that health checks be conducted 30-days prior to all major plastic surgery procedures.

Dr. Stanley Poulos, a board-certified San Francisco area plastic surgeon, stresses that it is essential for a surgeon to take a good medical history and exam of all patients, prior to committing to surgery. Current and past illnesses, especially cardiac or pulmonary problems, prior surgeries, and a survey of all medications should first be discussed. Additionally doctors may require a battery of tests, depending on patient history and planned procedures. Prior to clearing any patient for surgery Dr. Poulos recommends investigating the following:

- **Urinalysis** When it comes to preparation for a plastic or cosmetic surgery procedure, a urinalysis can inform the doctor if you have certain types of infections, like a urinary tract (UTI), bladder, or kidney infection. Urine tests are also effective in detecting high blood pressure and diabetes.
- **Blood Count Test** Also known as a complete blood count (CBC), this blood test literally counts your blood. It takes note of the number of red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. This tells physicians if you're anemic (red blood cell deficiency) or have a blood clotting disorder like hemophilia. CBC tests also detect infectious bloodborne diseases like HIV or hepatitis.
- **Heart function/Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)** Essentially, the ECG is a medical test that tells if your heart is in good condition through detecting any heart abnormalities by measuring the electrical activity of the heart when it contracts. Cosmetic surgery basically causes tremendous stress on the body, with the heart being one of the most important organs when it comes to stress response. That is why it is crucial for the doctor to assess whether your heart can endure the trauma during the operation.
 - **Chest X-Ray** The Chest X-Ray is also one of the tests that may be required for your procedure. This is usually carried out to check the condition of your lungs and see whether you have breathing difficulties when you are put in anesthesia. This test is especially requested if you are a smoker or have a history of smoking. Signs of pneumonia or any breathing disorder may result to the postponement or cancellation of your surgery.
 - **Smoking Use and History** Mixing nicotine with plastic surgery can result in problems:
 - Loss of cheek skin, nipples or tummy skin after a facelift, breast lift, breast reduction, or tummy tuck surgery
 - Infections
 - Death of fat cells (fat necrosis), causing hard lumps
 - Delayed wound healing
 - Thick, wide scars
 - Blood clots, which can be fatal
 - Increased pain
 - Permanent small vessel damage adding risk even if you quit
 - Loss of breast implants
 - Life-threatening complications like stroke, heart attack, blood clots, and pneumonia.
- **Mammogram** The mammogram is typically required for women who want to get breast augmentation or breast lift done. This is to help detect signs of breast cancer.
- **Psychological Screening** Although there is no formal psych test to assess a patient's readiness and motives for cosmetic surgery, Dr. Poulos believes that it is important to first understand their reasons for desiring cosmetic change. Immediate red flags include: having surgery to try to keep a wayward spouse, an exaggerated concern over a minor problem, someone who seems addicted to cosmetic surgery, or a patient with body dysmorphic disorder. This syndrome is most appropriately treated by psychological treatment not surgical intervention.

- **Alcohol Habits** It is important not to drink alcohol before undergoing plastic surgery – or any type of surgery for that matter – as it can cause unforeseen complications and seriously impact final results and the way you heal. Alcohol, especially when consumed to excess, can dry out your skin, which can then result in cracks appearing. If you're having a plastic surgery procedure where skin is stretched (facelift, breast augmentation or abdominoplasty for example) then dry, cracked skin will make it harder for the surgeon to staple or stitch the skin together, resulting in a less than optimum result and possibly scar.
- **Body Weight** Sometimes patients will enter a plastic surgeon's office excited about a decision to finally move forward with breast or body contouring surgery, but then afterwards emerge having found out they are not currently a candidate because of excess body fat. This scenario is not only disappointing, but it can be an emotionally deflating and potentially embarrassing experience for patients. As a result, there are several specific reasons that your plastic surgeon might recommend weight loss prior to undergoing a procedure. Additionally the results that one can achieve are likely to be much better if weight is in a better range. Body contouring surgery is great for shaping the body, but it is not a method or substitute for weight loss or weight control. Dr. Poulos employs a full-time wellness/weight loss coordinator to help patients achieve a healthy body composition (body fat percentage and lean muscle mass balance) prior to undergoing body contour procedures.

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