



Are You Physically (& Mentally) a Good Candidate for Cosmetic Surgery?



In 2009, then Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the Donda West Plastic Surgery Law, requiring health checks be conducted prior to all major plastic surgery procedures in the state.

This was following the death of rapper Kanye West's mother. It was later determined that her heart attack was spawned by a combination of numerous postoperative complications and preexisting coronary artery disease.

Today, women especially peruse Instagram and covet a perfect pout, perky derriere and firm breasts seen on Insta models. Just because you may desire cosmetic surgery does not mean you are physically or mentally fit for it NOW.

Dr. Stanley Poulos is a board certified San Francisco area plastic surgeon who takes steps to ensure the health and safety of his patients during surgery and post-operatively. Here are some indicators Dr. Poulos looks for to assess patients for surgery.

Dr. Poulos stresses that it is essential for a surgeon to take a good medical history and exam of the patient. Current and past illnesses, especially cardiac or pulmonary problems, surgeries, and medications should all be discussed. Lab tests may be required on a case by case basis depending on patient history and planned procedures.

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 blood borne 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 & 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 takes time with his patients to learn 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 (face-lift, 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. Dr. Poulos sympathizes with the emotional pain that such patients feel, and he wants to help them realize their goals. However, there are several specific reasons that your plastic surgeon might recommend weight loss prior to undergoing a procedure. In addition, the results that you can achieve are likely to be much better if your weight is in a better range.

Consider an overweight woman who wants breast reduction surgery. Even when the breasts become smaller and more uplifted, it is extremely difficult for us to deal with the fullness lateral to the breasts (the "bra roll"), which significantly compromises the aesthetic result. In addition, it is much harder to get a beautiful transition between the breast and the abdomen due to the excess weight. On the other hand, let's consider the patient that is overweight and wants a tummy tuck or liposuction. In this instance, the surgeon will not be able to remove all the excess fat in these areas, as it is technically challenging and can look odd as it is out of proportion to the surrounding fatty deposits. Even large volume liposuction cannot fully solve this problem.

Body contouring surgery is great for shaping your body, but it is not a method or substitute for weight loss or weight control. At Dr. Poulos' clinic there is a full-time wellness/weight loss coordinator who helps patients achieve a healthy body composition (body fat percentage and lean muscle mass balance) prior to undergoing body contour procedures.

What is an option for those who need to lose weight to be a better candidate for cosmetic surgery?

There is an FDA approved “Gastric Balloon” procedure that Dr. Poulos performs. It is appropriate for patients with a BMI of 30 to 40 that have not had previous weight loss surgery. Patients diagnosed with bulimia, binge eating, compulsive overeating, high liquid calorie intake habits or similar eating related psychological disorders are not good candidates. Dr. Poulos has now treated numerous patients who have successfully lost up to 20% of their body weight with the balloon procedures and have gone on to aesthetic body contouring with much improved results.

How does the balloon method work?

This non-surgical outpatient procedure begins with a diagnostic endoscopy to ensure that there are no contraindications and that it is safe to perform. Once the patient is mildly sedated and comfortable, the procedure can begin. The deflated gastric balloon is inserted through the esophagus and into the stomach. A syringe is then used to fill the balloon with a sterile saline solution. Once the weight loss balloon has been filled with saline, it expands to approximately the size of a grapefruit. The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes. Patients can usually return home after the placement or removal procedures within 30 minutes. Over the last 20 years this procedure has helped over 277,000 people. The gastric balloon encourages portion control while patients make healthy changes to diet and lifestyle.

How long does the balloon stay in place?

The balloon remains in the stomach for the first six months after the procedure. With the stomach balloon and Dr. Poulos’ support team, patients usually see the most drastic results in the first six months. It is very important to use this time to develop healthy habits that will continue for not only the 12-month weight loss program, but for the rest of one’s life.

What to expect after the balloon placement.

Over the first 14 days after placement, patients may experience nausea or vomiting. Dr. Poulos recommends a liquid diet for his patients during the first week to help manage these symptoms. Also prescribed are effective anti-nausea drugs to help the patient through the initial stage.

How is the balloon removed?

Once the stomach balloon has been in place for six months the balloon is removed. The simple and non-surgical procedure is very similar to the placement process. Once the gastric balloon has been removed, it is very important to continue working closely with Dr. Poulos’ team and coaches to follow the personal diet and exercise plan provided. This will help to keep you in a positive and healthy mindset while achieving your weight loss goals.

Stanley Poulos, MD

Dr. Stanley Poulos specializes in cosmetic breast surgery and body contouring procedures. He helped pioneer the quick lift facial rejuvenation surgery in California and is recognized as one of the leading plastic surgeons in Marin County and the entire San Francisco Bay area.

Dr. Poulos and Plastic Surgery Specialists have extensive experience in body contour procedures. A graduate of the University of Texas Medical School, Dr. Poulos completed his internship and residency at UC San Francisco. He completed a plastic surgery fellowship at St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco and is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. www.psspecialists.com

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