

3 Plastic Surgery Myths (And How To Avoid Them)

Makeover television shows and celebrity social-media reveals can make plastic surgery look like no big deal, but surgery is surgery whether it's an elective procedure to improve your appearance or a medical procedure that's necessary to save your life. **Plastic surgeon Dr. Stanley Poulos of Plastic Surgery Specialists** in the San Francisco Bay area performs a wide array of procedures ranging from breast surgery and body contouring to weight loss procedures, and he goes to great lengths to make sure patients understand the nuances of the plastic surgery procedure they are interested in—and don't have any of these common misconceptions.

Myth #1: "A little discomfort" means the same thing to everyone

There's a big difference between the mild discomfort associated with a superficial treatment like IPL and recovering after an invasive plastic surgery procedure such as abdominoplasty, any type of body lift or combination surgery such as a mommy makeover. "Everyone has a different pain threshold and post-op bruising and swelling vary from patient to patient," explains Dr. Poulos. And in addition to pain, certain plastic surgery procedures require a longer period of time for recovery

Dr. Poulos emphasizes that the actual level of pain and recovery time are two very important things you need to be clear on well before plastic surgery, because recovery time before returning to marathon running may be a lot different than being able to drive or get out of the house without assistance. "You need to know so you can make necessary arrangements with work and childcare or elder care if need be. Some procedures can take at least a week or two before resuming normal activity, so the more realistic the expectations the better," says Dr. Poulos. He also advises speaking to a few friends or references who had the same procedure, and stresses, "Just remember that like childbirth as time goes by the experience may seem easier than it was."

Myth #2: "Minimal scarring" can be guaranteed

"Scarring has nothing to do with the surgeon's skill and everything to do with the patient's genetics," clarifies Dr. Poulos. He explains that a highly-skilled surgeon can use the same exact plastic surgery and closure technique on two different people, one will have minimal scarring while the other will not. Skin tone and lifestyle factors like smoking play a role in scar formation as well, so be sure to discuss this with your doctor before surgery.

Myth #3: Results last forever

Aging doesn't stop when you get a rejuvenating plastic surgery procedure like a facelift. Sure, you may be able to rewind the clock 10 or so years, but it keeps on ticking because aging is inevitable. "The 'shelf life' of a facelift is about 10 years, and the better the skin elasticity at the time of surgery, the closer to a decade you'll get. The odds are even better you'll have a more enduring result if you don't smoke or sun-worship," says Dr. Poulos, who emphasizes the importance of having realistic expectations when it comes to plastic surgery—both short- and long-term. Regardless of the procedure you're considering, be sure to ask your surgeon how long the results can be expected to last, and what you can do to improve their longevity.

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