

## Choosing a Surgeon

In most countries, any licensed physician can perform cosmetic surgery; it's a lucrative, growing field, and many practitioners are eager to jump on the bandwagon. It goes without saying that you should always choose a surgeon who has a license to practice medicine and is certified by his or her country's [accrediting medical organization](#). Yet there are many other factors to consider when choosing a plastic surgeon to trust with your face and/or body.

The first step, of course, is to see who's out there. There are plenty of online resources for locating a plastic surgeon... in fact, perhaps a bit *too* many. A quick Google search might lead you to hundreds of plastic and cosmetic surgeons in your area. Even if a surgeon is [board-certified](#), he or she may not necessarily be a specialist in the area of cosmetic surgery. Many internists, emergency room physicians, OB/GYNs and general practitioners may offer Botox, facelifts or liposuction as "additional services" to their regular practice. You're always better off going to a surgeon who has trained in and practices plastic surgery exclusively.

If you are able to find online reviews of the surgeons you're considering, these can be invaluable, as they provide unvarnished reports from real consumers. One or two negative reviews aren't necessarily a warning sign, but if a physician has a long string of mostly negative reviews, that's definitely a red flag. Also, as in most things, personal referrals are a good starting point. If you know someone who had a good experience with a particular physician, that's a valuable resource for you.

After you've done your homework and narrowed down a list of surgeons, your next step will be an in-person consultation with one or more of them. Some may offer a free consultation, while others may charge a fee. Be sure to find out when you call to make the appointment whether a fee is required to consult, and if it can be applied toward the cost of your surgery (if you end up having one).

During this consultation, the doctor should give you a thorough explanation of the procedure(s) you're considering. At no time should your discussion feel like a sale pitch; a responsible surgeon will be direct and honest about what can and cannot be achieved with surgery. Don't hesitate to ask questions, either — about the procedure, the facility, the total cost and anything else you want to know. If the country's laws permit, you might ask to see "before and after" photos of the surgeon's work, or even to speak with previous patients who've had the surgery you are considering. Also, be sure to ask whether images of your own procedure will be used in medical literature or advertising.

Don't forget to evaluate your impressions of the entire practice, not just the surgeon. Helpful and courteous staff are also important, as well as a clean, well-maintained facility. Every country has professional and/or governmental entities that oversee the quality of its medical facilities, to ensure they meet all legal standards of safety, equipment, office layout and staffing. If you elect to have the procedure performed at the physician's office, make sure it is an accredited and licensed facility.

Finally, there is one more factor that's more difficult to define, but is one of the most important: the doctor-patient rapport. How does the surgeon treat you? Does he or she listen carefully to your concerns and answer your questions thoroughly? You should never feel pressured, hurried, frustrated or anxious about communicating directly with your doctor. A true professional puts the patient at ease, while projecting a reassuring sense of authority. Only you can be the judge of this — so do your research, prepare your questions and get ready to find the right surgeon who can help you achieve your goal of a new you.