

Patients' Top Praises (and Complaints) About Plastic Surgeons

“90% of plastic surgeons are incompetent and only in it for the money,” complains one online reviewer in North America. Clearly this patient has had a bad experience — or perhaps a series of them! Obviously, this complaint is wildly exaggerated, but people who are in an emotionally vulnerable state after surgery may be disappointed and looking for someone to blame. Aesthetic surgery, in particular, is more likely to stir up a storm of emotions than a routine medial surgery like an appendectomy. Being sensitive to this will go a long way toward helping each patient have a positive experience before, during and after plastic surgery.

As a medical professional, you have a good sense of when your patients are satisfied and when they aren't. But if you could be a fly on the wall listening to what patients tell each other about you and your practice, what do you think you would hear? It's vital to understand not just *whether* patients are satisfied, but *why*. Your credentials are important, of course, but while being a board-certified [ISAPS member](#) with an accredited facility is an advantage, it isn't enough to build the personal rapport that is so vital to a good patient experience.

The best way to learn is to listen. According to patients around the world, exceptional plastic surgeons...

- Offer a free or low-cost consultation to invite the patient to learn as much as possible about the procedure he or she is seeking, and allow plenty of time to make a decision (weeks or months rather than days or hours);
- Really LISTEN to their patients, answering all questions and being honest about the potential benefits, drawbacks and risks of the surgery being sought. They never make patients feel rushed or unimportant, even as they're still careful to respect the other appointments that may be waiting;
- Give patients an accurate assessment of the realistic potential for improvement, as well as possible drawbacks and risks;
- Make an extra effort to meet the friends or family members who will be involved in the patient's recovery care;
- Take a genuine interest in each patient's recovery, following up with phone calls and/or personal emails between office visits. Some patients report outstanding support services from their plastic surgeons that include offering assistance with arrangements for housecleaning or food delivery services;
- Plan in advance how to address any revision surgery that may be needed, including costs.

As you might expect, the most common patient complaints about plastic surgeons include...

- Taking a “one-size-fits-all” approach to patient consults, seldom deviating from their prepared script or “rushing” through consultations in order to see as many patients as possible;
- “Pushing” a more expensive service or product when it may not be needed, or urging the patient to undergo many procedures at one time. Soliciting patients is specifically prohibited by the [ISAPS Code of Ethics](#), and should always be a warning sign of questionable practices;

- Appearing to care for patients only until the surgery is complete — or even until they make the final decision to commit to surgery, later appearing “cold” or less approachable (rather than committed to surgery);
- Hiding costs or charging “extra” fees for office visits, dressings and medicines, or charging the same fee (or more) for revision surgery than for the original procedure.

Fortunately, you don’t have to make any of these mistakes yourself in order to learn from them. Use these responses to push your own practice from good to great!