

Is that you, Grandma, in the Waiting Room....Senior citizens, the latest consumers of Plastic Surgery?

Dr. Levens "A New You" column for November 2011

It seems that it is never too late to consider plastic surgery. As the "senior" members of the Baby Boomer generation turn 65, their desires to remain youthful and vital have translated into a new trend in elective, plastic surgery.

According to annual statistics from the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), nearly 85,000 patients in this age group underwent procedures in 2010 which is an increase over 2009, while the numbers for some other groups were down or remained flat. Clearly, the economic downturn has had an impact on all consumer spending and elective medical procedures have not been immune. This trend is also reflected in a change in the distribution of many cosmetic procedures from more to less invasive. For senior citizens, however, the factors leading to increasing demand include increasing numbers of healthy, active senior citizens, continued activity in the workplace, access to dispensable income and availability of safe options for plastic surgery.

Of the 85,000 last year, the majority underwent facial rejuvenation procedures such as face lift and eyelid surgery, the next largest group underwent breast and body contouring procedures such as breast lift/reduction and liposuction. A recent article in the New York Times (August 8, 2011) and an August segment on The Today Show have brought increased awareness to this trend. Concerns about safety in older patients have been raised, but an article in the Journal of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in June 2011 found no significant difference in complications in people over 65.

Just how old is too old? This is a question with no clear answer but one that definitely can create controversy and debate amongst family and friends of seniors who opt for plastic surgery. As with anyone contemplating elective surgery, it is most important to put safety first. First it is best to consult with a reputable, qualified plastic surgeon with all of the credentials including board certification and privileges to operate in an accredited hospital and/or outpatient surgical center. A good start is to seek the recommendations of your own physician. He or she will be able to assess your health risks and provide a medical clearance to proceed. It is also helpful to check references from friends with direct experience with the surgeon.

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