

Cosmetic Surgery Checklist

If you are considering cosmetic surgery, this checklist may help to ensure you have a safe experience that meets your expectations.

Things to check BEFORE your consultation:

Nurse counsellors

Some cosmetic surgery companies and advisory services use nurses to provide a free initial consultation. You should be aware that in most cases they are paid by commission and may even try to persuade you to have surgery on parts of your body that you were previously happy with. You should have a consultation only with the person who will perform your surgery.

Ask whether the person performing the consultation is the person who will be performing your surgery. If you see a nurse counsellor, ask whether she is paid by commission.

Free consultations

'Free consultations' are a marketing means to attract patients. Properly trained and established surgeons will offer up to two or more consultations to assess your concerns and answer your questions and you should expect to pay a fee for your surgeon's time. Clinics offering 'free' consultations will incorporate the cost of the consultation into the treatment fees. Some clinics charge for follow-up consultations

Ask whether there is a charge for additional consultations before or after surgery.

Training

All UK surgeons have the letters 'FRCS' after their name, including general surgeons, breast cancer surgeons (oncoplastic surgeons) and ENT surgeons. This means that they are Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons. Only surgeons who have completed the specialist training and passed the specialist examination for plastic surgery have the letters FRCS(Plas) after their name.

Ask whether your surgeon has the FRCS(Plas) qualification

BAAPS / BAPRAS membership

Not all surgeons performing cosmetic surgery have specialist training. It is therefore important to check that your surgeon is appropriately trained. There are numerous 'academies' and 'associations', many of which require no verification of a surgeon's training. The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) maintains a record of accredited plastic surgeons which are required to audit their results every year. Full BAPRAS members have all held NHS consultant plastic surgery posts in the UK.

To check the credentials of your surgeon visit: www.baaps.co.uk and www.bapras.org.uk

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Follow-up

The vast majority of UK consultant plastic surgeons have their own practices, whereas the large clinics employ surgeons, often from Europe. Unfortunately many of these surgeons spend a relatively short time in the UK before going back to their own country to set up their own practices. You need to be confident that your surgeon will still be around to follow you up should you wish.

Make sure that your surgeon has an established practice in the UK and will be able to follow you up. This is particularly important after breast enlargement, where you should be offered a yearly check-up

Aftercare

One of the commonest sources of dissatisfaction after cosmetic surgery is poor aftercare. Although travelling abroad may seem attractive if the cost of surgery is less, you need to consider what will happen to you if there was a complication. Would you be able to travel to the hospital on regular visits (perhaps even daily) if your wounds did not heal? Certainly you need to consider the cost of return trips if you have surgery abroad.

If you are considering surgery abroad, make sure you can afford to go back abroad for corrective surgery if required. Most UK surgeons do not charge for corrective surgery. Check whether you will have to pay further hospital and surgical fees.

Fixed price

The cost of an operation is made up of the surgical fee, the hospital fee, the anaesthetist's fee plus the costs of any implants. It is very important to verify whether any fee you are quoted includes the cost of any additional surgery that may be needed if things do not go to plan, or any additional nights in hospital. Most surgeons offer a price which included the cost of any additional treatments and follow-up in the first year after surgery.

Check that you are covered financially for at least a year after surgery in the event that things do not go to plan.

Implants

If you are considering having breast implants it is important to know that not all breast implants are the same. The quality and therefore cost of breast implants vary tremendously, with the cheapest implants costing a fraction of the cost of the best implants available. The price difference is the reason why some companies are able to offer cheap breast augmentation. Remember, these are going to be in your body for many years.

Check which types of implants are planned and ask how much they cost. Also check whether there is a warranty provided with breast implants, and what is covered, for example leakage/rupture.