



Safety First

10 Golden Rules For Safe Cosmetic Surgery

By Michele Garber

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#SAFETYFIRST

Cosmetic Surgery and Non-Surgical Aesthetic Procedures are on the rise. Due to the increase in popularity the world of “Beauty” is a very lucrative business leading to a crowded and competitive marketplace. Not all surgeons are equally trained or qualified. Many medical doctors with core specialties outside of aesthetic medicine are setting up cosmetic practices.

Having a cosmetic surgery procedure can be a life altering positive experience or it can have disastrous results. Even celebrities make errors in judgements and can end up with bad surgical results.

Buyer Beware! Be an Informed Consumer.

“I am passionate about making your journey to a more beautiful you safe and exciting. I hope you will take these rules for achieving a successful cosmetic surgery experience as seriously as I do. Before you take the plunge into what can be the best moment of your life, please be certain to do your homework so that you can make the choice that is right for you.”

*Michele Garber
Founder, Patient Advocate
The NipTuck Coach*

Disclaimer: Information contained within this Ebook is intended solely for general educational purposes and is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice.

Rule 1

ONLY GO TO A BOARD CERTIFIED PLASTIC SURGEON.

There are many medical doctors today performing plastic surgery who are not Board Certified Plastic Surgeons. However, there are major differences between a doctor who is a cosmetic surgeon and a plastic surgeon. **A COSMETIC SURGEON WILL NOT HAVE THE SAME MEDICAL TRAINING AS A PLASTIC SURGEON.** Understanding your surgeon's training and education is critical to making an informed decision.

Plastic surgeons are experts in facial and body procedures and have undergone a rigorous training.

Plastic Surgery is a surgical specialty with at least 3 years of general surgery training and 3 years of plastic surgery training.

Plastic Surgeons must pass comprehensive written and oral examinations, and adhere to a strict code of medical ethics.

Doctors who have other board certifications and training in areas of medicine such as general medicine, general surgery, dermatology, radiology, gynecology, or any other medical specialty, can legally perform cosmetic surgery procedures, and are required to take minimal training in cosmetic or plastic surgery.

Cosmetic surgeons are not necessarily unqualified or bad unskilled doctors, however, understanding the complexities of human anatomy is why plastic surgeons take many years of specific training.

All cosmetic surgeons and plastic surgeons belong to a variety of medical organizations with titles that often appear confusingly similar to each other.





For example The American Board of Cosmetic Surgery (ABCS) is not the same as The American Board of Plastic Surgery, (ABPS) www.abplsurg.org. The American Board of Cosmetic Surgery is the only certifying board that evaluates and certifies doctors exclusively in cosmetic surgery.

In order to be board -certified by the ABCS, a doctor must be board certified in one of the following surgical specialties: Dermatology; General Surgery; Obstetrics and Gynecology; Ophthalmology/Oculoplastic Surgery; Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery (with MD degree); Otolaryngology; or Plastic Surgery.

Most board- certified plastic surgeons belong to the American Society of Plastic Surgery (ASPS), www.plasticsurgery.org. Many plastic surgeons are also members of the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), www.surgery.org Facial Plastic Surgeons are MD's who are trained exclusively in reconstructive surgery of the face, head and neck. Facial Plastic Reconstructive Surgeons are Board Certified by The American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (ABFPRS), www.abfprs.org and may be Fellows of the American College of Surgeon (FACS), www.facs.org.

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR DOCTORS TRAINING AND BOARD ASSOCIATIONS ACTUALLY MEAN. Ask Questions.

Rule 2

DO YOUR OWN DUE DILIGENCE. THE ONLINE WORLD OF COSMETIC SURGERY IS VERY DECEPTIVE.

With the popularity of cosmetic surgery and the competitive nature of the industry, there are increasingly more online review sites and message boards dedicated exclusively to Plastic Surgery where patients, and also commercial businesses masquerading as individual patients, voice their opinions, grievances and praises. These are also online platforms for surgeons to promote their practices, offer special deals, and answer patient questions.

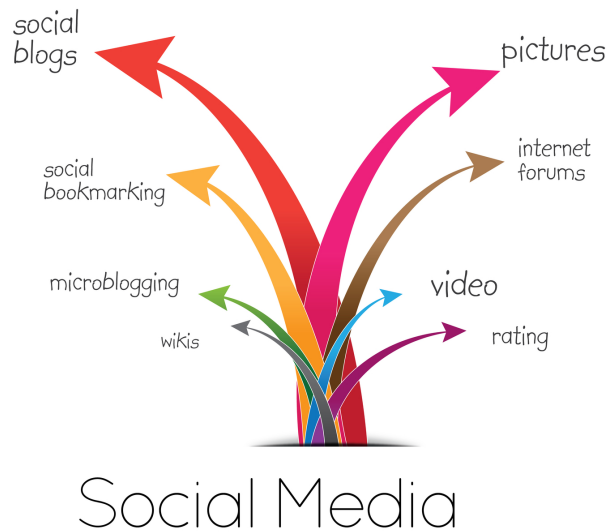
CHOOSE YOUR SURGEON BASED ON EXPERIENCE, RESULTS, SKILLS, EDUCATION, CONTINUING EDUCATION, SURGICAL SPECIALTIES, AUTHORED PUBLICATIONS, TRAINING, CLEAN RECORD OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS, TRUST AND YEARS IN PRACTICE.

DO NOT CHOOSE YOUR SURGEON BASED ON ONLINE REVIEWS, MESSAGE BOARDS, QUOTES IN MAGAZINES, OR CELEBRITY STATUS.

WHEN CHOOSING A SURGEON OR MEDICAL AESTHETICS PRACTITIONER CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Staff from one plastic surgeon's office may write unfavorable reviews about a competing plastic surgery practice pretending to be a patient. Unfortunately this happens more than you think.
- A disgruntled patient may defame a plastic surgeon online because she was unhappy with the results, not because she really had medically "bad plastic surgery". Some patients are never happy with their results and blame the surgeon.





- Not all members of message boards who claim to be patients – are really patients. Some may be employees from competitive plastic surgery practices, manufacturer representatives, or emotionally unbalanced individuals seeking attention. It's a wise practice to not believe everything you read or see online, unless you have vetted the individual yourself.
- Responses on Plastic Surgery forums are sometimes answered by staff in the voice of the doctor, rather than by the doctor. Plastic Surgeons are busy, some doctor's hire marketing consultants to answer online forums and message boards on their behalf. On occasion the information may not be accurate or the doctor may claim they have been involved in research for a particular new technology, when in reality they have not, therefore, misleading a potential patient.
- Online message boards where doctor's answer patient questions is a form of advertising. Doctors often pay subscription fees to be part of these forums, with the ultimate goal of capturing leads. These Websites can be helpful when seeking information on a particular plastic surgery procedure.

**REMEMBER, GREAT MARKETING DOESN'T NECESSARILY
TRANSLATE
INTO GREAT SURGICAL RESULTS.**

Rule 3

NEVER SHOP FOR BARGAIN PLASTIC SURGERY.

With the growing popularity of plastic surgery, there are an alarming number of new websites cropping up promoting discounted plastic surgery. Don't bid for discounted plastic surgery. You are taking a huge risk that your outcome will be less than optimal. Then whatever money you saved, plus more will be spent on fixing a mistake. Additionally, there are many online websites and daily deals offering discounts on Botox, Breast Augmentation, Laser, Liposuction and more. Be wary of these deals. Some of these discounts are marketing gimmicks to get you through the door where you will be upsold.



There are well-respected plastic surgeons and medical spas sending email specials to their patients. These marketing tactics are acceptable and valid.

Many highly qualified plastic surgeons are now spending more time fixing bad cosmetic surgery results. In fact, some doctors say that 40 – 70% of their new patient cases are for revision plastic surgery caused by less skilled or qualified doctors. The best surgeons do not have to advertise bargain prices. If you can't afford the surgery you want right now, save your money until you can. You will be much happier.

YOU ARE NOT BUYING A NEW PAIR OF SHOES.

YOU CANNOT RETURN YOUR FACE OR BODY BECAUSE YOU DON'T LIKE THE WAY IT LOOKS.

Rule 4



IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU SEE IN THE DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM – RUN.

Now you've selected your surgeon and are going for your first consultation. When you walk through the surgeon's doors it's important to be very observant. You can tell a lot about the practice and how happy the patients are by paying close attention to the patients in the waiting room.

Do the patients look happy? Do they look natural and beautiful, or tight, puffy and pulled? Are they annoyed because they've been waiting to see the doctor for a long time? Do they engage with other patients talking about how great their surgeon is? How does the staff interact with the patients and each other? Do they appear hurried or stressed? Are they courteous and friendly?

You'll want to feel comfortable when you first step into the office and get a positive feeling from the staff.

Some practices even offer VIP services, such as spa robes and massage for their perspective patients, adding very nice touch, easing your anxiety.

The aesthetics of an office is also important; it sets the tone and is your first impression. Most plastic surgeons have aesthetically elegant offices. If the office looks disorganized, dark and run down, it may be a reflection of the practice and the surgeon.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS. IF IT DOES NOT FEEL RIGHT –

Rule 5

IS THIS SURGEON RIGHT FOR YOU?

Many board-certified plastic surgeons are skilled in all areas of the face and body. However, some surgeons specialize in facelifts, rhinoplasty, breast augmentation or body contouring.

Understanding your surgeon's specialty is an important part of your decision making process. Only go to a skilled board certified plastic surgeon that routinely does the particular surgery you are seeking. If the surgeon is a novice at a particular procedure or new technology, consider seeking another consultation with a more experienced surgeon.

WHEN EVALUATING YOUR SURGEON, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

- How many years in practice?
- How many patients are seen per day?
- How many surgeries are performed per week or per month?
- How many surgeries for the particular procedure you are seeking do they do per month?
- How many revision surgeries do they perform and how many of these revisions are from their practice?

You may get some push back for asking these questions, but all of this information will make you more comfortable with your final decision. The more you know about the surgeon and the practice, the more

ONCE YOU HAVE MADE YOUR DECISION- STOP.

DON'T SECOND-GUESS IT, OTHERWISE YOU WILL DRIVE YOURSELF CRAZY.



Rule 6

MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

Committing to Plastic Surgery is confusing, emotional and has risks. Preparing in advance for your surgery ensures a safer and less stressful journey. Have a clear understanding of your procedure, benefits and risks. If you are confused or feel your surgeon is not being clear about the procedure, don't be intimidated. You are paying a lot of money and deserve your surgeon's time and explanation.

Keep in mind that your anatomy is unique. Sometimes, despite your surgeon's skills and best efforts, the outcome may not meet your expectations. You may not like the outcome; perhaps you feel that your face is too tight or not tight enough. Your surgeon may or may not agree with you. This does not mean that your surgeon will perform a complimentary revision.

IN SOME CASES REVISIONS ARE NECESSARY, THIS IS THE UNKNOWN FACTOR WHEN YOU UNDERGO PLASTIC SURGERY.

Having a clear understanding of your costs and liability of Revision Surgery will lessen your anxiety before your surgery. Every plastic surgery practice has specific revision policies. Most of the time your surgeon will waive his surgical fees for a revision but you will be responsible for paying for the surgical facility, staff and anesthesiologist.



Understand all of your costs and read all consent forms before you sign them, so that you have no future surprises.

If you have any doubts, take home the consent forms and have an independent party review them before signing.

Remember, having an open discussion with your surgeon about your concerns is key to good communication.

ULTIMATELY EVERY SURGEON WANTS HIS OR HER PATIENTS TO BE HAPPY.

YOU ARE A WALKING BILLBOARD FOR YOUR SURGEON'S WORK.





Rule 7

ONLY HAVE YOUR SURGERY IN AN ACCREDITED FACILITY.

Today many surgeons have their own office -based operating room facility. Making sure the surgery facility meets all the strict accreditation standards ensures the highest quality of patient safety. Check with your state's regulations and ask to see proof of accreditation and the date of the last review. The facility where your procedure will be performed should be in good standing with at least one of the following organizations:

- American Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities. (AAAASF)
- The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)
- Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program (HFAP)
- Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC)

Your surgeon should have all the proper equipment and staff on hand for emergencies. *Be sure to discuss how emergencies are handled.*

Ask your doctor about what hospital privileges they have and at which local hospitals in case the unexpected happens and you need to be hospitalized.

Hospitals have strict standards for awarding surgeons hospital privileges. If your surgeon does not have hospital privileges in the geographical area where his surgical facility is located, this may be a red flag. Find out why he/she does not have hospital privileges at the local hospital.

In some cases your surgeon may not have hospital privileges in the same city where he performs surgery, if his main practice is in another state. In this case make sure that you have a clear understanding how he/she handles emergencies.

If you are not comfortable with these factors, find another surgeon.



Rule 8



BEWARE OF BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS.

Before and After photos are tricky and can be deceptive.

For photos to show the true results precise measurements must be documented at the time the Before photo is taken and every element must be duplicated as close as possible for the After photo.

Many practices do not have the proper equipment to take accurate medical Before and After photos, nor do they take the time necessary to take them. Many times it is the patient coordinator, not the surgeon who is taking the photos and they may not be skilled as a medical photographer. Some practices send their patients to a professional medical photographer for photos.

In some cases doctor's use photo's from other sources, such as manufacturers, skincare product lines or stock photos and infer that they are real patients. It is not unheard of for a practice to use patient's photos from competitive doctors or celebrity doctor websites.

Ask your surgeon if you can speak with a current or former patient(s) who had the same surgery within the last 12-24 months. What looks good at 3 months, may not look as good in 24 months. If at all possible try and meet the patient in person. If your surgeon does not have any recent photos or is reluctant to give you a name of a patient, this could be a red flag.

Review these photos with a keen eye and if something does not look right to you it probably is not.

TIPS ON WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- Is the lighting the same in both the Before and After photos? Is the angle of the face or body the same?
- Has the photo been touched up? Does it look too perfect, with no natural imperfections? It's easy to Photoshop Before and After photos.
- Is there a freckle or scar that looks different in the After photo?
- Were there additional surgeries or procedures that were not documented prior to the After photos. If there were and these were not documented the After photos will naturally look better.
- Are the Before and After photos of actual real patients?
- Does this photo resemble a photo you have seen online?
- Ask questions about the photos.

Trust and Integrity are important factors when choosing your surgeon.



Rule 9

BEWARE OF MARKETING GIMMICKS.

There are lots of new anti-aging trends and technologies on the market, which are FDA approved for a particular use however, some doctors may use these new technologies or treatments off label. Therefore they have not been FDA approved for a particular treatment, for example Botox injections in the neck area to soften platysma muscles can be a very effective treatment, however, Botox Cosmetic is not FDA approved for treatment in this area.



Not all the latest trends and FDA approved anti-aging technologies are worth the money, time commitment or the risk, and the results are not always consistent. Body contouring and Skin tightening treatments are popular anti-aging treatments that may fall in this category.

There are many factors to be considered when deciding if a procedure is for you including age, skin laxity, health, weight, long term effects, plus more. Consider evaluating the cost vs. benefit over the course of treatment(s). At times it is more cost effective to save your monies for a plastic surgery procedure, rather than an expensive band-aid.

Many new technologies are very expensive for the doctor to purchase, keep this in mind when seeking a consultation. Is this really the best procedure for you or is there an alternative procedure that would be more effective?

Managing your expectations and understanding the risks are very important. Look over the marketing materials, clinical studies and before and after photos carefully before you make your final decision.

RESEARCH THE TECHNOLOGY BEFORE YOU COMMIT TO SPENDING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. BEWARE OF PROMISES.

Rule 10

BE PREPARED.

This is an exciting journey, preparing in advance for your surgery and post -op recovery will ease your anxiety and help make this life altering experience as pleasant as possible.

Having a strong emotional support system in place throughout your journey is very important. Make sure you have someone in your life that is supportive of your decision, someone whom you can easily confide in and who can give you extra handholding if you need it.

Prepare yourself prior to your surgery by taking it easy a few days leading up to your surgery. If you can, take the week off work before your surgery date.

In addition to preparing for your surgery, prepare yourself for your recovery. Lineup extra help at home or plan on staying at a post-recovery facility. If you do stay at a post-recovery center, you still may need extra help with children, housekeeping, animals, preparing meals, etc.

Although your surgeon may say your recovery time is 2 weeks, you may need longer. Every body heals differently. It's wiser to prepare for a longer recovery, than not be prepared at all.





Make a list and buy everything you need well in advance so as not to stress yourself out before the big day. Set-up your recovery area in your home and have everything you need easily accessible. You will probably be staying close to home for a couple of weeks, so make yourself comfortable.

Don't rush your recovery and if you have any post-op concerns always discuss them with your surgeon.

CONSIDER HIRING A PROFESSIONAL PLASTIC SURGERY COACH, WHO CAN BE YOUR ON-GOING SUPPORT SYSTEM BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR PROCEDURE.

About Michele

Michele Garber, is a patient advocate and a leading expert in the plastic surgery and beauty industry. She is nationally recognized as the “go to” person when considering plastic or cosmetic surgery. Michele works closely with women and men nationwide who want to undergo a surgical or non-surgical cosmetic procedure and are seeking a qualified, ethical and skilled Board Certified doctor within the core speciality.

She has helped many patients find the right surgeon for them, and has been an advisor to plastic surgeons and skincare manufacturers since 1998. Michele has over 22,000 Twitter and Facebook followers, is a beauty expert, speaker, writer and guest blogger, as well as Editor of Beauty News Talk. She hosts a weekly podcast, NipTuck Coach Radio, and has been featured on national and local media.

Michele’s goal is to help individuals navigate the highly complex and confusing choices available when it comes to deciding who will perform their plastic surgery or non-surgical procedure. Safety and education being her first goal. Ultimately, Michele helps people select a proven medical expert who will perform a beauty procedure that will give them not just a great result, but the best result.

Michele knows the media hype, salesmanship and the hard reality behind plastic surgery and non -surgical medical aesthetic procedures. She has also seen the positive effects good plastic surgery can have in someone’s life. Having been a patient herself she can relate to the anxiety, confusion and potential complications that can occur from making the wrong choice in a surgeon, or simply not being prepared for the plastic surgery journey.

Michele brings you her compassion, expertise and personal experience to ensure that her client’s medical aesthetic journey is a complete success. She lives in the Bay Area with her husband and her rescue dog, Bella.

For more information contact Michele 415.494.7211 or email her at info@niptuckcoach.com.