



PRESS RELEASE

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REWARD VS RISK OF COSMETIC PROCEDURES

While we are all aware of the rewards or positive outcomes of cosmetic procedures, in recent times, the potential risks and dangers of treatments performed both in Australia and abroad, have also surfaced.

While there is always the risk vs reward factor to consider with any procedure, the Cosmetic Physicians College of Australasia (CPCA) has outlined some important guidelines for anyone considering a cosmetic procedure, to ensure they receive the best possible treatment, not only in terms of results, but also health and safety.

Cosmetic procedure - to do it or not do it

While the arguments for and against cosmetic procedures could take up an entire chapter in a book, according to Dr Douglas Grose, President of the CPCA, the first question to ask yourself is - will the procedure give the desired outcome every time and what are the risks if there are problems? Can all problems be corrected?

"I think of this as the 'risk reward ratio'. If the risk is high and the benefit small - don't do it. If the risk is small and the benefit high then certainly consider it. All cosmetic treatments are based on 'want' rather than 'need'. If you have a cancer that requires surgery, then risk is less of an issue because you 'need' the surgery. On the other hand having breast implants is not medically necessary and is thus a 'want' and risk reward becomes much more relevant," says Dr Grose.

According to Dr Mary Dingley, Board Member of the CPCA, the key is to "know yourself". Ask yourself, what is it that concerns me? Does everyone think I look tired all the time, even though I've slept well? Do I have loads of sun damage that is now catching up with me – and have I changed my sun habits so that it's not going to be worse after treatment? Is the issue that I am so concerned with just visible to me? Can I afford the downtime and how much, if I can? Can I afford it financially and is it within my budget?

All of these questions, and more, should be well considered prior to looking into any cosmetic procedure.

"Know what it is that concerns you, and although you may do some research about procedures, don't focus on one procedure to the exclusion of everything else. It's important to remain open and heed the advice of your doctor. What you believe to be the best procedure for you, may differ from what your doctor recommends. Consider all options before making a final decision as there may be something better for you and better for your problem that should at least be considered," says Dr Dingley.

The risks

As with any procedure, there is always an associated risk.

"Things can go wrong even in the best of hands, but the way to try and minimise those risks, is to go to a reputable clinic, with doctors who are either conducting or supervising all treatments on site and have the ability to manage complications should they ever occur," says Dr Dingley.

However, it's also important to manage expectations as the procedure may not deliver the desired result and some cases, the patient may even end up worse off.

"What you should avoid are techniques which are relatively unproven. New technology and procedures are not necessarily better, they may be just good marketing tools because they are 'new'. I would recommend avoiding any practice where you feel even slightly pressured into having the procedure. Qualifications are not always necessarily the best guide either. Intense marketing techniques and offers of payment plans should also sound loud alarm bells," cautions Dr Grose.

Dr Dingley also agrees that it's important to be wary of advertising.

"There are a lot of people and places advertising in very enticing ways. Medical clinics have more rules and regulations with which to comply, compared with most businesses; sometimes the flashiest ad may be for the least-qualified place. If something sounds too good to be true, then that's probably the case".

Cosmetic procedure checklist

1. Take time to evaluate your motivation and clearly identify your concern.
2. Try to find someone you know, who has had the procedure, to give a first hand account. Then find out which doctor performed the treatment.
3. Do some online research but be wary of the oversell of benefits of any procedure
4. Make an appointment with the doctor at a time when you're not rushed. Arrive on time, observe the clinic – is it clean, well structured

and well run? It's important to take into account the cleanliness and presentation of the practice, as it can be an indication of the overall level of care provided.

5. During the consult, determine whether you have rapport with the treating doctor. It's important that you feel they understand your issue, and ask them to repeat your concern as well as how it can be improved. Also, it's important to ensure that the procedure has been explained clearly and in detail.
6. Make sure you find out what impact the procedure will have on your lifestyle and assess if you can manage that. Ensure costings have been explained. If something is temporary, find out how long will it last and when it may need repeating.
7. Some relatively minor procedures, such as injectables or removing skin tags, may be able to be done during the first consultation, as long as you are happy with everything. However, remember there is never any rush and you can always take your time to think about it.
8. For more major procedures, always go home and think about your decision.
9. If you do decide to proceed with the treatment, make sure you allow for any downtime that may result from the procedure.
10. Written information should be given to you about your proposed procedure, as well as post-procedure to guide you through any recovery phase and to advise what to do to contact the doctor should you have any queries.
11. Plan on having at least two opinions before proceeding with any treatment. Any consultation should be face to face, not over Skype with a remote doctor unless you live in a remote rural area.

Cosmetic procedure preparation

There are a number of steps to take in preparation of a cosmetic procedure but first and foremost, check your social and work calendar.

"Make sure you have no major events for up to one week after the procedure as there may be swelling and even bruising even from simple treatments. This period would be longer for more major procedures, especially involving facial surgery.

"Preparation would also depend on the procedure. If it was something simple then just wear comfortable clothing and don't plan on doing anything for a few hours after. For more major procedures, the treating doctor will advise on whether you will need an escort. Generally if the procedure is to be done in a hospital setting, then someone to assist you home afterwards is a must. If you do not want to be seen in public afterwards then stock up on food and books before the procedure," advises Dr Grose.

According to Dr Dingley, while some procedures require no real preparation, other than making the enquiries and decisions, some may require preparatory

medication, sun avoidance etc. Your doctor will advise you, so it's important to follow that advice!

Treatment follow-up

Like the preparation phase, this will also vary with the procedure. Some treatments won't require a follow-up but for others the follow-up will be more intense. It may just involve a telephone call from the doctor's surgery staff or it may involve physical attendance for changes of dressings or removal of sutures and review by the treating doctor.

It may also involve not having facials, for instance, to any area that has had injectables; to avoid movement in a certain area or there may be special creams to use or to avoid using, for a period of time.

"Your doctor will advise you, usually also in writing, but if in doubt, always ask," says Dr Dingley.

Finding the right practitioner

Word of mouth or a personal reference from someone who attends that practitioner is always a great place to start. However, according to Dr. Grose, whilst the practitioner needs to be trained and qualified, the number of qualifications is not always the best way to decide competence.

"First ask the question - how often have you done this procedure and how many have you done in the last week or month. If the answer is a very low number then be wary. Finally, if you don't like or relate to the person, then definitely go elsewhere as cosmetic treatments are very personal and you need to like and build a relationship with that person over the course of the treatment or over many years where the treatments need to be repeated regularly, such as injectables," says Dr Grose.

For Dr Dingley, the right practitioner is someone you trust, who understands you and who communicates well with you.

"It is important to find someone who has the skills you need to perform the procedures required, and if, over time, other skills are needed, they are able to refer you to another practitioner who has a different skill-set appropriate to your needs," says Dr Dingley.

The don'ts

Dr Grose strongly advises against going to another state or another country for treatment and to avoid the lure of all-in-one treatments.

"If you have a problem and the practitioner who performed it is a long way away, then you may find that practitioners nearby will decline to treat the complication as they did not do the original procedure. You may have to fly interstate or back to the foreign country to have further treatment at great cost.

While it is tempting to "have it all done in one treatment", this is incredibly dangerous. The longer a person is lying on a table under anaesthesia, the higher the risk becomes and generally the recovery process is much longer. It is much better in the long term to deal with each problem one step at a time with short procedures, " says Dr Grose.

"Also if ever in any doubt, don't do anything! All cosmetic procedures are discretionary so it's your choice whether to do them or not. You will always have the opportunity to do something later if it suits you at another time," says Dr Dingley.

"Finally, the goal of the CPCA is to advance the highest principles of professionalism in the management of patients' aesthetic concerns which is why for cosmetic medical treatments it is recommended that patients use one of the Fellows or members of our College," says Dr Grose.

About the CPCA:

The CPCA is the leading representative body for medical practitioners practicing non- or minimally-invasive cosmetic medical treatments in Australasia. The College, which evolved from the Cosmetic Physicians Society of Australasia, provides education, training and ethical practice standards for its Fellows and Members who are required to have relevant training and experience as prerequisites for admission to the College. Members are also required to keep abreast of the most up-to-date, relevant information and latest medical and scientific advances

Overall, the key role of the CPCA is to develop and maintain the highest standards in cosmetic medicine, which helps safeguard the public.

<http://www.cPCA.net.au/>

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