

ASPS

How Your Surgeon's Membership Matters to You

Most people have experienced “body issues”—that nagging dissatisfaction with a physical feature, whether it’s about skin, shape or size. Many of us complain to our friends; others just cover up; but some resolve to make a change.

Body issues can be particularly severe for people who have lost a substantial amount of weight or undergone weight reduction surgery. Eager to enjoy the benefits of their weight loss, they may find that their skin has lost elasticity and no longer conforms to their newly reduced body size.



Post-bariatric body contouring is an increasingly popular solution to excess sagging skin. This series of plastic surgery procedures may include a lower body lift to correct sagging of the abdomen, buttocks, groin and outer thighs, as well as lifts for the breasts, arms or inner thighs. These procedures remove excess skin and can improve the shape and tone of the underlying tissue that supports fat and skin.

The results of a body contouring procedure following aggressive weight loss are visible almost immediately, but it can take a year or more to see the final results. Aside from the natural effects of aging, the overall results are long-lasting for patients who maintain their general fitness and a stable weight.

Plastic surgery is just one option for improving your appearance, and one that should not be taken lightly. To decide if plastic surgery is right for you, it is important to thoroughly research both the procedure you are interested in and the surgeons who can perform it.

The popularity of plastic surgery is soaring—and more and more doctors are trying to meet the demand. In fact, any licensed physician can claim to be a plastic or cosmetic surgeon, even without specialized training and experience. Because many post-bariatric body contouring procedures are complex and may involve serious risks, educating yourself about your doctor's qualifications is one of the most important steps you can take to have a safe and successful outcome.

There are many ways to find a surgeon; many patients begin with recommendations from primary care physicians, friends and family. But when you're ready to make a choice, be sure your plastic surgeon meets the highest standards of education, experience and ethics.

When you choose a doctor who is a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), you can rest assured your surgeon is qualified to perform your surgery.

ASPS Member Surgeons:

- Have at least five years of surgical training, with a minimum of two years in plastic surgery.
- Are certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada—the gold standard in the plastic surgery specialty.
- Operate only in accredited facilities.
- Adhere to a strict code of ethics.
- Fulfill continuing medical education requirements, including standards and innovations in patient safety.

Well before your procedure, you'll meet with your plastic surgeon to discuss your goals and determine the best plan to achieve the results you want. The consultation is your opportunity to ask your surgeon tough questions. You should feel confident asking about your doctor's credentials, experience, outcomes and safety record in the

type of procedure that interests you. It is your body, your safety and your decision.

You may find the following list a good starting point for questions you'll want to discuss with your ASPS Member Surgeon:

1. Am I a good candidate for this procedure?
2. How many procedures of this type have you performed?
3. What will be expected of me to achieve optimal results?
4. What are the risks involved with my procedure?
5. How long can I expect recovery to take, and what kind of help will I need during my recovery?
6. Will I need to take time off work? If so, how long?

During the consultation, your ASPS Member Surgeon should:

- Answer all of your questions thoroughly and clearly.
- Ask for your thoughts about recommended treatment.
- Offer alternatives where appropriate, without pressuring you to consider unneeded or additional procedures.
- Welcome questions about your procedure and his or her professional qualifications, experience, costs and payment policies.
- Make clear the risks of surgery and possible outcomes.
- Give you information about the procedure you want.
- Leave the final decision to you.

Remember: It is your body, your safety and your decision. Careful research will help you make the right choice for you.



James Wells, MD, is the chair of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons' Public Education Committee and a past president of ASPS.

Body Contouring Statistics

Source: American Society of Plastic Surgeons

Procedure	Number of Procedures Performed in 2007
Breast Lift	104,176
Arm Lift	13,997
Thigh Lift	8,897
Lower Body Lift	8,564