

Risks and complication in Cosmetic surgery

Having cosmetic surgery is not getting a hair cut; it is real surgery with all potential risks and complications connected to it. There is no absolute guarantee about the outcome of your cosmetic procedure and no serious Plastic surgeon should give such a guarantee. Be realistic about your expectations and ask the surgeon about an honest advice. The ideal patient is the one with a comprehensible problem and realistic expectations and a realistic wish for correction. If a patient has a minimal, almost not visible problem but suffers extremely and has an extreme wish for correction a surgeon should think twice to recommend any operative procedure.

In general, procedures are safe; techniques have improved significantly over the past years. Nevertheless patients should be examined carefully prior to cosmetic surgery to avoid unexpected complications and select patients that should not undergo cosmetic surgery because of the compromised health status. Smoking increases the risk of wound healing problems and therefore patients should stop smoking four weeks prior to surgery up to four weeks after surgery.

Patients should be fully informed about the procedure, potential alternatives and the potential risks and complications. They should also be informed what to expect after surgery (e.g. what is a normal after course and what are unusual, unexpected symptoms).

In general, if patients are selected and prepared correctly, complications are rare. The following lists will provide an overview of general and specific risks and complications.

Risks and complications of any type of surgery (very rare in healthy patients):

- Allergic reactions
- Nausea and vomiting (not uncommon after anaesthesia)
- abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia)
- heart attack (cardiac infarction)
- airway obstruction
- blood clots (DVT, deep venous thrombosis)
- pulmonary embolism
- fat embolism
- stroke
- brain damage
- temporary or permanent paralysis
- nerve damage (temporary or permanent)
- malignant hyperthermia
- sepsis (blood poisoning)
- death

General risks for cosmetic surgery

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Hematoma (blood collection, blood clot)
- Seroma (wound fluid collection)
- Skin/ tissue death (necrosis)
- Delayed healing

Swelling
Bruising
Poor scarring (wide, stretched or thickened scars)
Numbness, tingling
Asymmetry
Irregularities, dimples, tuckers

Specific risks and complications (selected procedures)

Facelift

Asymmetry, shift of hairline, wound healing problems (especially in smokers), nerve damage (especially facial nerve), bleeding, swelling, bruising

Rhinoplasty

Bleeding, swelling, bruising, asymmetry, obstruction of nasal airways
It is not uncommon to have a revisional procedure (correction; 10-15% of rhinoplasties)

Blepharoplasty (eyelid correction)

Swelling, bruising, blurred vision, excessive tearing, dry eye, redness, asymmetry, ectropion (drooping of the lower lid caused by overcorrection or scarring), blindness (extremely rare; caused, for example, by bleeding behind the eye)

Breast augmentation

Infection (in extreme cases with loss of the implant), loss of nipple sensation (temporary or permanent), larger breasts will sag more over time, loss of ability to breast feed (rare), rippling of the implant (visible indentation in the skin), implant leakage or rupture (rarer with new generation of implants), capsular contraction (hardening around the implant which can lead to discomfort and dislocation of the implant)

Breast reduction, uplift (mastopexy)

Wound healing problems, excessive scarring (especially wider scars), infection, loss of nipple sensation, loss of ability to breast feed (risk higher than in breast augmentation), asymmetry

Liposuction

Contour irregularities, indentations, uneven areas, seroma (wound fluid collection), infection. Fat cells that are removed by liposuction do not come back. Nevertheless if you gain significant weight, the remaining fat cells can grow again and store more fat. You will also gain more in those areas that have not been liposuctioned.

Tummy tuck

Seroma (wound fluid collection), infection, wound healing problems, loss of tissue/ skin (necrosis), asymmetry, “dog ears” (remaining, bulging tissue at the end of the incisions in the hip area; will be easily removed 3-6 months after the original surgery, often disappears by shrinking), slightly increased risk of DVT (deep venous thrombosis)

Lower bodylift, thigh lift

Seroma (wound fluid collection), infection, delayed wound healing (especially in a moist environment like the groin area), significant scarring