

A close-up photograph of a woman's face and skin, focusing on her eye and the contours of her face. The image is warm-toned and serves as the background for the text.

Cosmetic surgery in close-up



Spire
Cosmetic Surgery



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Feeling good about your decision

We understand you'll have some important questions to ask before you make any firm decisions about cosmetic surgery.

To help you get the best from your treatment, we've produced this step-by-step guide, covering everything you need to consider before you go any further.

In this way, we aim to prepare you for your initial consultation with your cosmetic surgeon, help you ask the right questions – and work with you to make relaxed and well-informed decisions.

Choosing a hospital or a clinic

With so many cosmetic surgery providers to choose from, you'll need to create a shortlist of hospitals and clinics. If the cosmetic treatment you are considering involves an operation, then doing this based on factual information is particularly important.

Do your search properly

Having narrowed down your options, you may want to visit potential providers, or call them before attending a consultation with a cosmetic surgeon.

Care Quality Commission

In accordance with the Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009 and the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2010, all hospitals and clinics in England providing cosmetic surgery are regulated by the Care Quality Commission, and are inspected regularly against the Essential Standards of Quality and Safety set by the Care Quality Commission.

The Essential Standards are designed to ensure that you can expect:

- to be involved and told what's happening at every stage of your care
- care, treatment and support that meets your needs
- to be safe
- to be cared for by qualified staff
- your care provider to constantly check the quality of its services

The Essential Standards aim to provide assurances about the quality of treatment and services that patients receive. The registered manager of the hospital or clinic is responsible for ensuring that Essential Standards are maintained and the Care Quality Commission has the power to close premises that do not meet these standards.

You can check the registration details of a hospital or clinic on the Care Quality Commission website. Contact details are also shown at the back of this guide.

If you are in any doubt about a hospital or clinic's standards or capability, you should ask to see a copy of its latest Care Quality Commission inspection report. The registered manager of the hospital or clinic should be able to provide this, or you can obtain it from the Care Quality Commission.

Independent Healthcare Advisory Services cosmetic surgery standards

The Independent Healthcare Advisory Services (IHAS) is a membership organisation representing many of the UK's independent hospitals and hospital groups. IHAS, in conjunction with the Cosmetic Surgery Interspeciality Committee, has produced a booklet, 'Good Medical Practice in Cosmetic Surgery', to support and complement the General Medical Council (GMC) code for good medical practice. IHAS also operates a comprehensive complaints code for handling patient complaints. Contact details are shown at the back of this guide.

Do I need to see my GP first?

You'll find that most cosmetic surgeons will be happy to see you for an initial consultation without a referral letter from your GP. However, if you plan to go ahead with a cosmetic operation, the surgeon should seek your permission to contact your GP for details of your medical history. This is an important safety precaution, especially if your operation means you'll need a general anaesthetic.

Although you may not need a referral letter in order to make an appointment to see a surgeon, we recommend that you consult your GP at the very beginning of the process so that you can get their professional advice.

How do I choose a surgeon?

As a private patient seeking cosmetic surgery, you are able to choose the surgeon you want. With so many surgeons to choose from, you'll need to give yourself time to research potential surgeons' qualifications, reputation and experience. Overleaf are some useful tips when weighing up your choice.

- Ask your GP's advice about the specialist surgeons in your area.
- Private hospitals and clinics should be able to give you details of the surgeons available, their qualifications and particular areas of specialisation within the field of cosmetic surgery.
- Some hospitals and clinics run open days or information events where cosmetic surgeons give talks about their work. This gives you the opportunity to meet the surgeons and clinical staff on an informal basis. However, be wary if you are offered a special price or discount for making an immediate booking – this practice contravenes the Good Medical Practice in Cosmetic Surgery guidance of the Independent Healthcare Advisory Services.
- Personal recommendations are always valuable, but bear in mind that surgeons tend to specialise in particular types of cosmetic surgery. Be careful about making a judgement based on someone else's recommendation alone as their situation may be very different to yours. The surgeon should satisfy specific criteria to give you a level of confidence in their ability.

1. The surgeon should appear on the specialist register of the General Medical Council (GMC)

Almost any doctor can call him or herself a cosmetic surgeon. Even letters after their name, such as FRCS (Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons), don't mean that the surgeon has specialist training or experience in performing cosmetic procedures.

Surgeons who have completed six years of specialist training and have obtained the further qualification FRCS (Plast)* are then added to the specialist register – plastic surgery section.

To check whether a surgeon appears on the GMC specialist register, you will need to know their full name and, if possible, their GMC registration number. You can then carry out the check on the GMC website or by calling the GMC registration helpline. Contact details are shown at the back of this guide.

*The FRCS (Plast) qualification is only applicable to surgeons who qualified since 1986 when the qualification was introduced.

Surgeons who are on the specialist register but not the plastic surgery section

Cosmetic operations such as nose re-shaping and ear pinning may be performed by ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeons; cosmetic facial surgery may be performed by maxillofacial surgeons; cosmetic eye surgery may be performed by ophthalmic surgeons and cosmetic breast surgery may be performed by general surgeons. Although they will not appear on the plastic surgery section of the register, these surgeons should have undergone specialist training in cosmetic techniques in their area of expertise, and they should have experience in carrying out cosmetic surgery on the nose, ear, face, eye or breast.

In such cases, it is important to check that the surgeon does appear on the relevant GMC specialist register (for example, ENT surgery) and you should only consider them for cosmetic surgery on the area of the body in which they specialise. So, if you are thinking about having cosmetic surgery on different parts of the body at the same time, you should only go to a surgeon who is on the plastic surgery section of the register and has adequate experience in all the procedures you are considering.

2. Other health practitioners offering cosmetic treatments

Many cosmetic surgeons also offer non-surgical treatments such as anti-wrinkle treatment by injection (eg nerve-blocking drugs and dermal fillers), laser and pulsed light therapy. These treatments may also be performed by other health practitioners, for example GPs, dentists and nurses. Non-surgical treatments are also known as aesthetic treatments or cosmetic dermatology.

In England, the Care Quality Commission only regulates cosmetic treatments involving surgery. If you are considering non-surgical treatments such as wrinkle relaxing injectable treatments, dermal fillers or non-surgical laser and intense light treatments such as hair removal you will need to check that you are seeing a properly qualified specialist.

As a minimum, any doctor or dentist carrying out aesthetic treatments should be registered with the General Medical Council (GMC) or the General Dental Council (GDC), and any nurse should be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and work within its code of conduct.

You can check the registration status of any doctor, dentist or nurse on the GMC, GDC or NMC websites, or contact them by phone. See contact details at the back of this guide.

Nerve-blocking drugs are prescription-only medicines, which means they must be prescribed by a doctor or dentist. However, they may be administered by a nurse under the supervision of a doctor.

3. Membership of plastic and cosmetic surgery professional organisations

British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS)

Only qualified plastic surgeons who appear on the GMC specialist register can apply to become a member of BAAPS. This organisation is recognised by the Surgical Royal Colleges as a legitimate professional body representing the field of aesthetic surgery. BAAPS members are expected to undertake continuing medical education in aesthetic surgery.

British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS)

Surgeons on the GMC plastic surgery specialist register can apply to become a full member of BAPRAS. Many BAPRAS members focus on reconstructive surgery, but they may dedicate some time to performing cosmetic surgery procedures.

4. Care Quality Commission registration

Cosmetic surgeons working in hospitals and clinics are covered by the organisation's registration with the Care Quality Commission (see section on choosing a hospital or clinic on page 4). The hospital or clinic is responsible for ensuring that the surgeons working there are suitably qualified and practise according to the Essential Standards of Quality and Safety. All surgeons working in hospitals or clinics must participate in clinical performance measurement arrangements, which are monitored by the Care Quality Commission.

Your first consultation

The initial consultation with a specialist cosmetic surgeon will help you set realistic expectations of what your chosen procedure can achieve for you. The consultation will also help the surgeon make a professional assessment of your motivation for wanting cosmetic surgery, and whether they can offer treatment that will meet your expectations. You should expect to be asked a number of questions about your reasons for wanting surgery and the surgeon should show you 'before and after' photographs of similar operations they have performed.

You may find it helpful to bring a friend, partner or relative with you to the consultation, as there will be a lot of information to absorb and consider.

Make sure you are given a full explanation of any risks associated with the operation – in terms of expected side-effects (such as pain during recovery and scarring) and all possible complications. While it is tempting to avoid considering these issues, it is better to be fully aware of both the risks and benefits so that you can make the right decision. You should be given written information about the operation and

associated risks so that you can study this carefully at home. In addition, your cosmetic surgeon may write to you afterwards, to reiterate the medical information provided during your consultation.

Rapport with, and confidence in, your surgeon is vital as you will be putting great trust in them. You can really only get a feel for this at the consultation stage – so it is essential to make sure that you meet the surgeon who would be carrying out your surgery before you make your decision.

Don't let anyone rush you into making up your mind. You don't need to make an immediate decision and you may wish to go away and discuss it with friends or family, gather more information, seek a second medical opinion, take time to consider your decision, and perhaps return for a further consultation. If you decide to go ahead, it is best to allow at least two weeks between the consultation and the operation date – so that you have plenty of time to reflect and make sure that you are entirely comfortable with your decision.

How to make an informed decision?

Being well-informed will maximise your chances of being satisfied with your treatment. It is worth investing time to find out the answers to the following questions before or during your consultation. You will usually be paying for the surgeon's consulting time, so don't be afraid to use this time to ask plenty of questions.

1. What qualifications does the surgeon have?

Check whether they have just FRCS – which all surgeons have – or if they have FRCS (Plast)* which is a further qualification in plastic surgery.

2. Is the surgeon on the GMC specialist register?

You can check this on the GMC website or by calling the registration helpline.

See contact details at the back of this guide.

3. What professional organisations is the surgeon a member of?

A member of BAAPS – the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons – has further specialist training in cosmetic surgery.

A member of BAPRAS – the British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons – has specialist training in plastic and reconstructive surgery and may also perform cosmetic work.

4. What experience does the surgeon have in performing your procedure?

Ask how many operations they performed in the last year, how they measure their results and what proportion of their patients need further corrective surgery. These are perfectly reasonable questions to ask and a good surgeon will be pleased to explain their results and experience to you.

5. Can you speak to some of the surgeon's previous patients that have had the operation you are considering?

Specialist cosmetic surgeons often have a list of previous patients who are willing to speak to other patients about their experience. For confidentiality reasons, you'll need to be prepared to give a telephone number, so that the patient can contact you rather than you calling them.

*The FRCS (Plast) qualification is only applicable to surgeons who qualified since 1986 when the qualification was introduced.

6. If you will be having a general anaesthetic, who will be the anaesthetist and what are their qualifications?

The anaesthetist should be listed on the GMC specialist register. You can check this on the GMC website or by calling the registration helpline. See contact details at the back of this guide.

7. How many cosmetic surgery operations in total does the hospital or clinic perform each year? And how many of the procedure you're considering?

The registered manager of the hospital or clinic should be able to provide you with this information.

8. What quality standards does the hospital or clinic have?

You can check clinical quality standards by requesting a copy of the last Care Quality Commission report from the registered manager of the hospital or clinic or by checking the Care Quality Commission website. Some care providers also publish clinical outcome information on their own websites.

9. What medical back-up facilities and staff are in place to support cosmetic surgery operations?

If you'll be staying overnight in the hospital or clinic, ask about the resident doctor arrangements should any problems arise during the night.

10. How can you best prepare for the procedure?

This will depend to some extent on the type of surgery you are having. Ask the surgeon for more details.

11. What results can you expect and how long will they last?

Ask the surgeon to define subjective terms such as 'significantly improved'. Ask the surgeon if the procedure will need to be repeated in the future to maintain the result. If you are having implants or fillers ask how long they will last and if they will need to be removed or replaced at a later date.

12. What are the side-effects and potential complications of the procedure?

All operations carry risks as well as benefits. The chance of complications depends on the type of operation and other factors such as your general health. Your surgeon should explain how the risks apply to you. Ask about the psychological aspects and how most patients feel afterwards; a change in appearance can have profound emotional effects that you may not be expecting.

13. How long will it take to recover and what will this involve?

Ask the surgeon how you should expect to feel and to what extent you will need to 'take it easy', as you may need to make additional childcare arrangements or organise other help at home.

14. How much time off work should you allow?

This will depend on the type of surgery or treatment you are having. Ask the surgeon for more information so you can arrange time off in advance.

15. What are the follow-up arrangements at the hospital or clinic if you have any worries or feel that your recovery is not going well?

Ask how you will contact the hospital in the event of a concern and whether you will be able to see the same surgeon that performed your original operation.

16. How much scarring is there after the procedure? Will it change over time?

This will depend on the type of surgery you are having. Ask the surgeon for more details.

17. If you are not happy with the results of your procedure, what corrective treatment will the hospital, clinic or surgeon provide? Will there be a charge for this?

Occasionally, there are times when patients are not happy with the results of their surgery. It is important to have realistic expectations of what surgery can achieve, however you should ask what corrective treatment will be provided if you are unhappy and whether you will need to pay for this.

What's included in the price?

When you approach a hospital or clinic for initial information about cosmetic surgery, they should be willing to give you an approximate price that covers the treatment you are considering. However, most hospitals and clinics will not give you a firm quotation until you have attended a consultation. This is because the final price is often determined by the exact nature of the surgery and the choice of any implants that may be involved.

You should be given a personal written price quotation and a document explaining the terms and conditions of the contract, which you will need to sign if you decide to go ahead with treatment.

Make sure that you understand exactly what's included in the price you've been quoted. Some or all of the items listed below may be included in the package price, but if they are not included, you'll need to find out the additional price of the relevant items.

Before treatment

- Consultation with a cosmetic surgeon
- Further consultations should you require them
- 'Before and after' photos
- Blood tests and X-rays

During treatment

- Surgeon's fee
- Anaesthetist's fee if you are having a general anaesthetic
- Hospital or clinic charges for operating theatre, nursing care and accommodation
- Drugs and dressings
- Treatment of complications
- Cost of care if you need to stay longer than expected in the hospital or clinic

After treatment

- Follow-up consultations (usually two)
- Treatment of any complications after you leave the hospital

You should also ask about any cancellation charges just in case you want to postpone or cancel your treatment. You should be wary of hospitals and clinics that charge a high cancellation fee, as this may make you feel pressured into going ahead.

Additional information

Multiple procedures

In order to achieve the desired aesthetic result, more than one procedure is sometimes necessary. Commonly performed multiple procedures are abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) with liposuction, and breast reduction combined with breast uplift.

There are benefits and risks associated with having multiple procedures under a single general anaesthetic. Depending on the procedures involved and your general health, there may be greater or lesser risk to you of having one longer operation – rather than undergoing two or more separate operations.

The responsibility for the decision to carry out multiple procedures rests with the surgeon and anaesthetist, who must always act in your best interests, and in consultation with you. Their aim should always be to minimise the risk to you. If you want to have multiple procedures done at the same time, you should expect to undergo a comprehensive anaesthetic risk assessment to help your surgeon and anaesthetist decide on the safety of this approach.

Cosmetic surgery agencies

Cosmetic surgery agencies act as brokers to match-up prospective clients with surgeons, hospitals and clinics in the UK and overseas. If you ask an agency to arrange your treatment, you should be aware that they will be earning a commission from the surgeon, hospital or clinic – even though the price you pay may be the same as if you arranged your treatment yourself. If you do choose this route, you should take extra care to read the terms and conditions of any contract you enter into.

Treatment abroad

The idea of a holiday combined with cosmetic surgery may be appealing, but standards of care can be very different overseas. You could have problems if something goes wrong, especially once you have returned home and if you need follow-up care. It may be difficult to check out the quality standards of the hospital or clinic in advance and you'll be unlikely to meet the surgeon treating you until just before the operation. If you arrive and find you are not comfortable with the hospital, clinic or surgeon, you may feel it is too late to back out of the arrangement.

Useful contacts

British Association of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS)

The Royal College of Surgeons
35–43 Lincoln’s Inn Fields,
London WC2A 3PE
Tel 020 7430 1840
Email info@baaps.org.uk
Web www.baaps.org.uk

British Association of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (BAPRAS)

The Royal College of Surgeons
35–43 Lincoln’s Inn Fields,
London WC2A 3PE
Tel 020 7831 5161
Email secretariat@bapras.org.uk
Web www.bapras.org.uk

Care Quality Commission

National Correspondence,
Citygate, Gallowgate,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA
Tel 03000 616 161
Email enquiries@cqc.org.uk
Web www.cqc.org.uk

Department of Health

Web www.dh.gov.uk

General Dental Council

37 Wimpole Street,
London W1G 8DQ
Tel 0845 222 4141
Email information@gdc-uk.org
Web www.gdc-uk.org

General Medical Council

3 Hardman Street,
Manchester M3 3AW
Tel 0161 923 6602
Email gmc@gmc-uk.org
Web www.gmc-uk.org

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Bevan House,
Caerphilly Business Park, Van Road,
Caerphilly CF83 3ED
Tel 029 2092 8850
Email hiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Web www.hiw.org.uk

Independent Healthcare Advisory Services

Centre Point, 103 New Oxford Street,
London WC1A 1DU
Tel 020 7379 8598
Email info@independenthealthcare.org.uk
Web www.independenthealthcare.org.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Council

23 Portland Place, London W1B 1PZ
Tel 020 7333 9333
Email fitness.to.practise@nmc-uk.org
Web www.nmc-uk.org

Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

The Care Commission, Compass House,
11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY
Tel 0845 603 0890
Email enquiries@carecommission.com
Web www.carecommission.com

For further information about having cosmetic surgery at a Spire Healthcare hospital, visit www.spirecosmeticsurgery.com

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