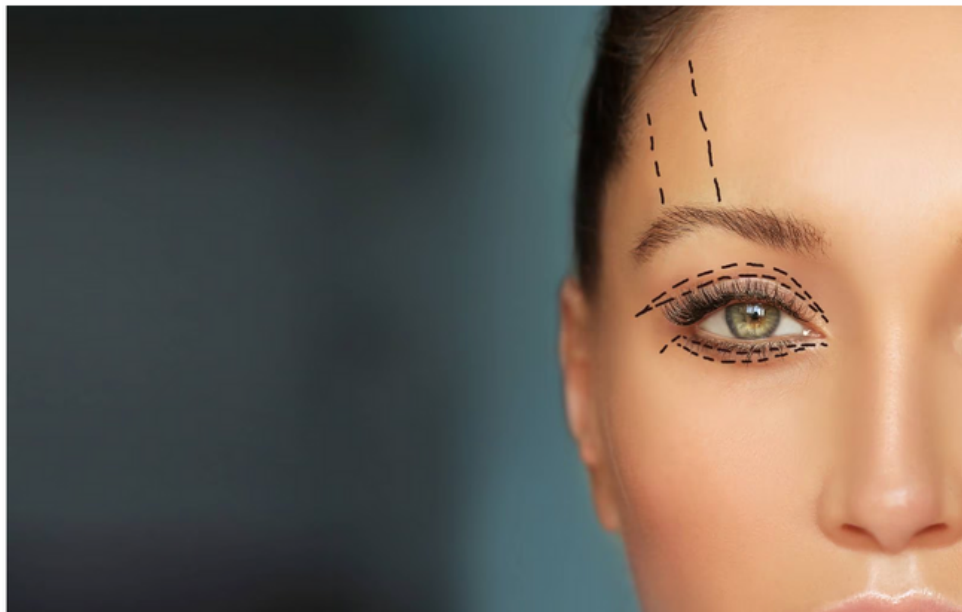


# Plastic surgery has advanced but you should still do your homework

Although cosmetic procedures are more mainstream the industry remains unregulated so research is advised

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Make sure your surgeon is on the specialist register, check before and after photographs and shop around before having an operation

Edel Corrigan

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Plastic surgery used to conjure images of seeping face bandages, florid bruises, or wildly unsettling facial expressions, but as the methods have become more refined and the outcomes more subtle, it's less of a scary proposition. For those considering plastic surgery, whether for medical or aesthetic reasons, knowing what to look for in a surgeon and what to expect before and after is essential.

## Plastic rising

"I think that it is quite apparent in all our practices that plastic surgery is popular for a number of reasons," says Dr Siún Murphy, MB BA BCh BAO MRCS MD FRCS (Plast), a consultant plastic, reconstructive and aesthetic surgeon. "My opinion is that we are increasingly accepting of plastic surgery overall as a concept. More people are discussing even non-surgical procedures like neurotoxins and fillers and these have even become part of everyday parlance without the stigma they used to have.

"Surgery is next in line in acceptance, with more people openly discussing procedures, sharing the information with friends and family and embracing the positive support that this brings."

Murphy says surgery has become much more tolerable for patients over the past decade. "There are better anaesthetics with faster recovery. Drain-free procedures such as drain-free breast reductions and lifts as well as drain-free tummy tucks are all now routine," she says. "Most procedures are day-case surgery, so no overnight stay is required. It's much more about a rapid recovery and getting people safely and happily back to their busy lives."

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In fact, after Covid many people are working from home or even hybrid working, which has allowed an accessibility to surgery that did not exist before. “If people undergo a procedure with me such as breast surgery, for example, they can be ‘back at the desk’ the next morning,” Murphy says.

## What to know and where to go

Plastic surgery is unfortunately an unregulated industry, says Dr Cormac Joyce, MBA FRSC (Plast), a plastic surgeon specialising in aesthetic surgery. “My wife is a GP and she could turn around and call herself a cosmetic surgeon and start operating,” Joyce explains. “I deal with so many complications from these ‘surgeons’ all the time. Patients don’t even know how to research. I deal with a lot of international patients, from the UK, Hong Kong and Singapore, and they are so informed in a way that Irish people aren’t. Some Irish people didn’t even know they’d get a scar from a tummy tuck. People don’t know where to research.”

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Joyce says there are several ways to ensure you are getting a reputable surgeon. “Start with the Irish Association of Plastic Surgeons and the Irish Medical Council. A plastic surgeon is on a specialist register – there are only about 50 of us in the country. Look at before and after photos and make sure to shop around. Don’t be afraid of surgeons offering free consultations, as I do, or worry about paying €300-€400 for a consultation – it’s money well spent.”

## Preparing yourself

Before undergoing surgery it’s important to be in a state of good health says Joyce. “Stop smoking, have good nutrition, a high-protein diet, no garlic, ginseng or arnica because they can increase risk of bleeding,” he advises.

“Physically and mentally, they have to prepare. Their BMI should be low, and they should be within 15lbs of their goal weight. They need support at home as well to recover. For tummy tucks, for example, there is no driving for two weeks and no housework.”

Some procedures could require two weeks off work post-surgery.

“Support is imperative,” says Joyce. “Prehab is a term that many people are now familiar with,” he adds. “Analogous to staying fit with joint mobility and exercise before such surgery as a joint replacement, prehab has its role in plastic surgery. Plastic [aesthetic] surgery is completely elective, meaning that the environment is completely controllable. This means we have time to optimise patients pre-op to increase fitness, lose weight where appropriate, stop HRT and reduce any other risk factors.”

A good fitness routine that includes core work is ideal before surgery, Joyce says. “We complement this with the use of our Emsculpt Neo machine which targets and activates the abdominal muscles and tones them passively using a machine in my office.”

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Murphy says post-operative rehab is just as important and includes dietary advice, physiotherapy and lymphatic drainage. “We keep in close contact with patients postoperatively to make sure their road is as smooth as possible,” she says. “It is a collective journey and we love, as healthcare providers, to make this as seamless and as positive an experience as possible.”

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