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SKIN DEEP

There are many ways to enhance your appearance today. Physical exercise, healthy eating, and head-to-toe image consulting are all various treatments to improve your looks and your life. At the same time, many are choosing to improve themselves through cosmetic surgery. Since 1997, there has been a 293 percent increase in the total number of cosmetic procedures. The top five surgical procedures for women are: liposuction, breast augmentation, eyelid surgery, breast reduction and rhinoplasty. The top five surgical procedures for men are: liposuction, rhinoplasty, eyelid surgery, breast reduction to treat enlarged male breasts, and hair transplantation.

"Cosmetic surgery gives patients a psychological boost," says Robert Graper, M.D. F.A.C.S. of Graper Cosmetic Surgery, located at 2915 Coltsclare Road in the SouthPark area. "They feel snazzy, better about themselves."

The location of Graper's office is convenient for his clients. "SouthPark is one of the hearts of Charlotte," notes Dr. Graper, "It's a good central location that is familiar to many people. A variety of restaurants and hotels make it convenient for patients' families."

Graper is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, Board Certified in Plastic Surgery and is a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, and the Mecklenburg County Medical Society. He performs all procedures except tummy tucks and breast reductions in his office, which is accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.

Barbara Pickens chose Dr. Graper when she felt unhappy with the bags under her eyes and the excess skin on each side of her chin. "Dr. Graper was highly recommended by friends," says Pickens. "I emphasized that I wanted to look natural. After viewing before and after photos of procedures he had performed, he showed me how I would look following surgery. I was so pleased with what I saw that I also had a half brow lift above each eye. This is something that bothered me, that I wanted done and did."

While we have the right to improve ourselves we should consider where we draw the line and will the improvement really make us happy? "Common sense dictates our procedures," adds Dr. Graper. "We know people don't want to look strange. They want to look better, but they don't want to lose their identity. A good plastic surgeon produces a normal appearance the patient is proud of; one they are glad they took the time and resources to have done."

Dr. Graper, who performs over 500 procedures annually, graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of North Carolina and with honors from the University of Cincinnati Medical School. He has over 18 years of caring for cosmetic surgery patients, started

the Greensboro Cleft Clinic and has traveled overseas on two missions with Operation Smile to repair cleft lip and palate deformities.

"Patients must have realistic expectations," adds Dr. Graper. "If they don't, they won't be happy. Our job is to educate the patient about these expectations. Most patients get excited when they see their potential changes."

Dena Tsangarides had a tummy tuck and breast lift following the birth of her three children including twins. "Dr. Graper came highly recommended," says Tsangarides.

"He showed me before and after photos of a mother who had twins and they were amazing. I'm a registered nurse and was impressed with Dr. Graper's bedside manor. This has been a wonderful experience for me. I'm amazed at the results and am 150 percent pleased. In fact, I returned to him for liposuction. I'm so thankful that my children are healthy but my pregnancies altered my body so much that I felt it was my turn to improve the way I looked."

To be a good candidate for cosmetic surgery, Dr. Graper recommends the following characteristics exist. First there must be a bonified problem. Second, the problem must bother the patient. "A lot of people have funny noses or face lines and it doesn't bother them," he notes, "so, there is no need for cosmetic surgery." Third, it

Once you know who you are and what makes you happy, the process of cosmetic enhancements can be just that, a process that enhances your life but is not a decision based on self worth.

must be safe; a reliable procedure must be available to fix the problem. Fourth, the patient has to be a good medical candidate. Fifth, the cosmetic surgeon has to have the resources to do the surgery comfortably; he/she is not stretched to the maximum for the procedure. Sixth, the patient must give themselves enough time to recover appropriately.

"We take care of our people," comments Dr. Graper. "I want good, normal patients that we can educate. When people come in wanting things I know I can't do, I tell them so. In these instances, the risks are too high. For example, a procedure might require so many incisions that the patient would not be happy with the results." Dr. Graper warns patients to be careful. Often they are caught up in procedures marketed by the cosmetic industry, which have not been scientifically proven as safe and effective, such as some fillers, lasers and thigh crèmes. In addition, patients need to be aware of surgeons who are not board certified plastic surgeons yet are doing cosmetic surgery.

People interested in cosmetic surgery procedures should consult with multiple—at least two or three—board-certified plastic surgeons certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery. It's important to choose a surgeon, like Dr. Graper, with an excellent reputation.



