



everything you need to **know**
before booking a
procedure

Whether you're preparing for your first-ever procedure, a revision or an additional treatment, there is much to consider. Not sure which factors should take priority? Four board-certified doctors and surgeons guide you to making the best decision for your needs. BY BONNIE STARING

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

MEET THE EXPERTS



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DETERMINE YOUR AESTHETIC GOAL(S)

When you're considering having work done, the professionals agree that your main responsibility is to identify what needs to change, not how it will change. "We listen to what a patient wants to achieve and then apply our medical and surgical knowledge to guide the patient through their options," explains Dr. Andres Gantous, MD, FRCS(C), FACS, an otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeon specializing in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery at Toronto Facial Plastic Surgery.

A doctor can demonstrate what can be achieved by showing photos, allowing patients to try sizers on over their breasts (for augmentation procedures), manipulating an area to mimic a lift or tightening procedure and other methods. "There are computer software programs, where the teeth in a photograph can be modified and then presented to the patient," explains Dr. Friedman. "A composite resin mock-up that can be worn on the teeth is also very effective in communicating the changes that can be made to a smile."

HOW TO COMMUNICATE YOUR GOALS

1 Determine what achieving your aesthetic goal will mean to you. "It's also important for us to determine what is the concern you have and try to find out how that impacts your life," says Dr. Robert Sleightholm, MD, FRCS(C), a plastic surgeon practising in cosmetic surgery at Brampton Cosmetic Surgery Center & Medical Spa.

2 Fully explain your goal with detailed descriptions (speak about size, shape, colour, how the area feels, etc.), instead of using generic terms, such as "refreshed," "nicer" or "more attractive." This helps a professional create a procedure plan specific to your needs. "Many patients will think that they need

a face lift when all that's required is a bit of plumping of tissues, which can be achieved with fillers or fat transfers, instead," says Dr. Gantous.

3 Whether your need for a change is due to an accident, aging or another reason, providing a visual reference for your goal helps. "Bring in a photo of yourself before the noticeable changes have occurred," advises Dr. Brian S. Friedman, DDS, a general and Cosmetic Dentist in Toronto.

4 "Patients can also do some research on possible procedures online," says Dr. Jerome Edelstein, MD, FRCS(C), a plastic surgeon at Edelstein Cosmetic Plastic Surgery in Toronto. "They can learn a lot about what's available to treat what bothers them, and they can view before and after images to get a better idea if those images convey the results they want."

HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

"Sometimes the patient's expectations may be higher than what the procedure can actually accomplish," says Dr. Sleightholm. "Part of that may be even related to the Internet because there are so many websites where there seems to be perfect results for every person shown." Although photos can be useful for determining results, it is hard for a layperson to discern the number of procedures performed on that patient, if you share the same physical and medical characteristics as the patient in the photo, and if any post-procedure work to reduce scarring was done on that patient. A professional will guide you through what's possible and what is far from reasonable. "Our job is to know what patients think they want and to let them know what actually can be achieved with a certain procedure," says Dr. Gantous. "My goal is to make a person happy, and if I don't think I can do that because what they're asking for isn't realistic, I'll be straightforward and tell them," explains Dr. Edelstein,

who claims it happens about 10 per cent of the time. "They'll either listen or keep on searching for a surgeon who'll say OK."

FIND A SUITABLE PROFESSIONAL

All four doctors agree that prospective patients should be diligent in their search for a qualified professional. Not sure where to start? Here are some tips:

- Speak to friends and family who've had experience with the procedure(s) you're interested in
- Do an Internet search
- Speak to your family doctor
- Check out the Beauty Finder at elevatemagazine.com.

Once you've come up with a list of professionals, check out their websites and credentials. "If you're looking for a surgeon, make sure the person is a plastic surgeon with a fellowship with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Canada," advises Dr. Edelstein.

You can search the Royal College's database at royalcollege.ca, as well as those of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario at cpso.on.ca and the Canadian Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at cafprs.com.

THE CONSULTATION

The next step is to book a consultation in order to meet with a professional and for the professional to meet with you. Expect to share your aesthetic goals, and if the doctor recommends a certain procedure, ask how many he or she has done in the past year. "In most cases of surgery, there

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is a learning curve, and the more experience a surgeon has, generally the better the result," says Dr. Sleightholm.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Although it may seem overwhelming, the time spent in the consultation process is worth the investment, even if it means you decide to put off a procedure or opt for a different regimen altogether.

1 A professional should have a combination of skills and credentials, and offer you honesty and a sense of comfort. "I will tell patients if they don't feel comfortable with me they should see other physicians," explains Dr. Gantous. "I will often give them names of colleagues who I think are good."

2 "It's important that a doctor spends more than five minutes with you when talking about a major surgical procedure," adds Dr. Edelstein. "And the bottom line is how good they are. You want to see evidence of the kind of results they get. Ask if they do anything differently to get better results."

3 Expect to book more than one appointment. "It is not uncommon for someone to require more than one consultation with a professional or a number of professionals," says Dr. Friedman. Doctors possess varied skill sets, which may lead to different recommendations. Dr. Sleightholm adds: "If the opinions from two doctors are opposite from each other, then you might consider a third consult to see if it can be a tie-breaker."

4 With so many physicians, dentists, dermatologists and surgeons to choose from, you have every right to be picky. Seek out a professional's social media networks, such as Facebook or Twitter, to get a sense of how they interact.

THE MATTER OF LOCATION

Today, patients can opt to have work done at a hospital, clinic or medspa.

How do you choose?
"It will vary on the doctor's practice and the patient's own biases," explains ▶

\$ financing Provincial health plans, such as OHIP, don't cover the costs of aesthetic procedures, but patients do have financing options so they can avoid delaying a procedure due to cost concerns. Using a financial company such as [Medicaid \(medicaid.com\)](http://medicaid.com) can provide you with financing for a portion of or the complete cost of a cosmetic surgical or dental procedure. Medicaid provides confidential financing by paying the doctor or service provider directly and offers patients pre-approval so there are no surprises at the office. By opting for Medicaid financing, patients can take advantage of low monthly rates, choose the terms that work best for their needs (from six months to five years) and pay off their balance ahead of schedule without penalty.

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What **treatment approach** is suitable for you?

This chart gives you an at-a-glance idea of two treatment options geared to different aesthetic goals. This chart is only a guide and in no way should replace consulting with a professional.

DESIRED RESULT	PROCEDURE OPTIONS*	WHAT IT INVOLVES	RECOVERY TIME (Back to Office)	RECOVERY TIME (Back to Strenuous Activity)	DURATION OF RESULTS**	COST RANGE
A Firmer Neck	Neck lift	Skin is lifted, muscles are tightened, excess fat is removed	Two weeks	Four weeks	Permanent	\$7,000 to \$10,000
	Liposuction in the neck area	Excess fat is removed	One to two weeks	Three weeks	Years	\$2,000 to \$3,500
A More Youthful Face	Facelift	Skin is lifted, muscles are tightened, volume may be added in areas	Two to four weeks	Four weeks	Permanent	\$7,000 to \$10,000
	Fillers in the nasolabial folds	A solution is injected under the skin to increase volume in an area	Five minutes	Zero downtime	One to 1.5 years; expect to touch up every nine months	\$500 to \$1,500
A Firmer Middle	Tummy tuck	Skin is lifted/excised, muscles are tightened, excess fat is removed	Two weeks	Six weeks	Permanent, as long as weight is maintained	\$6,000 to \$9,000
	Liposuction in the abdominal area	Excess fat is removed	One week	Six weeks	Years, as long as weight is maintained	\$3,000 to \$5,000
A Better Bust	A breast lift with implants	Skin is lifted, muscles are tightened, implants are inserted	One week	Six weeks	Years***	\$6,000 to \$12,000
	Breast implants only	Implants are inserted	One week	Six weeks	Years***	\$6,000 to \$8,000
More Attractive Thighs	Thigh lift	Skin is lifted/excised, muscles are tightened, excess fat is removed	Two weeks	Four weeks	Permanent	\$8,000 to \$10,000
	Liposuction in the thigh area	Excess fat is removed	One to one and a half weeks	Two weeks	Years, as long as weight is maintained	\$4,000 to \$5,500
Smoother Forehead/ Brow Area	Brow lift	Skin is lifted/excised, muscles are tightened	Two weeks	Three weeks	Permanent	\$6,500 to \$7,000
	Botox	Botox is injected under the skin in the forehead area	Five minutes	N/A	Four to six months	\$300 to \$800
A Brighter Smile	Veneers	6 upper and 6 lower porcelain veneers are installed	Patient wears temporary veneers for one week while permanent ones are crafted	N/A	Decades, as long as the patient practises good dental hygiene	\$10,000 to \$18,000
	In-office whitening and a take-home kit	The in-office procedure starts the whitening process; patient continues treatment at home for 1 to 2 weeks with a take-home kit (with customized trays)	N/A	N/A	Maintenance may be required after one year	\$300 to \$600

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Dr. Gantous. "There is no right or wrong answer since the same doctor who works out of a nice private clinic more than likely works in the hospital, too."

Surgeons agree that the choice comes down to a patient's preferences. "When patients of mine are given the opportunity to choose, it's based on either the safety of the hospital or the privacy and pampering of the clinic," says Dr. Edelstein, who adds that safety equipment is identical in the hospital and clinic environments of his practice.

For surgical procedures Check to ensure that a facility is accredited by the Canadian Association for Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgical Facilities at caaasf.org. The national organization formed in 1990 to ensure that surgical procedures performed outside of a hospital environment are done safely.

For non-surgical procedures locations Ensure a location is under the umbrella of a physician's practice. "Make sure the physician is truly active with the practice and not just someone who attaches her/his name to it, even when it comes to non-surgical treatments such as chemical peels and laser hair removal," explains Dr. Edelstein. "Perhaps a technician is doing the treatment, but he or she is much more likely to be well-trained if there is a physician responsible." [©]

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* Certain criteria make some options more appropriate for some patients than others. Always consult with a certified professional before making a decision. ** Despite having a procedure done, the aging of the area will continue. *** Results vary depending on certain factors such as skin elasticity, whether a patient regularly wears a bra, capsular contracture, etc.