



On the Nose

Are you ready for the new rhinoplasty?

BY JUDY ARTUNIAN

could have had the small bump on her nose removed years ago, but she didn't want to endure the pain of surgery. Then she started closing in on her mid-40s.

"I felt like I was getting a little witchy looking," recalls the Worcester, Pa., resident. Last year, at the age of 45, Skotleski-Fulmer finally underwent a rhinoplasty to have her nose reshaped. "I wish I had done it years ago," she says now. "It was unbelievably pain-free."

Surgeons say that for most patients, rhinoplasty is a less taxing experience today than it was in years past, thanks to improved surgical instruments and techniques. That may be

one reason why 166,187 rhinoplasties were performed in 2004, according to statistics from the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

Nose-worthy

Still, rhinoplasty, like any surgery, comes with its share of discomfort. It also has its limits. In fact, doctors say that the best candidates for rhinoplasty are people who understand that when it comes to the nose, one size does not fit all.

"There seems to be a perception fostered by some media, particularly TV shows such as 'I Wanna Famous Face' on MTV, that suggest one can custom-order a nose," says Dr. George Rudkin, a board-certified plastic surgeon who is an assistant professor in the division of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Medicine.

How could Meg Ryan's pert little nose possibly look out of place on anyone's face? Picture it on the chin-heavy mug of Jay Leno and you get the picture.

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JOAN SKOTLETSKI-FULMER



Before



After

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"The ideal nose is one that no one notices. You want people to notice your eyes, lips and cheekbones," says Dr. Sam Naficy, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Bellevue, Wash.

A generation ago, it wasn't hard to spot a rhinoplasty patient because many people sported noses that looked pinched or too tiny for their faces. The surgical techniques of the day caused doctors to remove too much cartilage and bone.

Plastic surgeons can now perform "open" rhinoplasty on many patients. It gives them a better view of the nasal skeleton so they can make the subtle changes that result in a more natural-looking nose.

Up-front Expectations

You can help boost your chances for a successful rhinoplasty by giving your surgeon a clear idea of the nose you envision. Comb magazines for photos that you can bring to your first appointment. The surgeon will use computer imaging to show you how close he or she can come to your ideal. Your surgeon will take into account your facial features as well as your skin's thickness. If you have thick skin, which is common among blacks and Hispanics, your nose will have less definition than if you had thin skin.

It comes down to the way the two skin types drape over the nose's cartilage. Naficy explains the difference this way: "If you drape a sheet over a bottle, you have a better chance of guessing what's under it than if you put a thick down blanket over a bottle."

Make sure you are comfortable with the final computer image. Your surgeon will use it as his or her guide. "I print the image out before surgery and tape it to the wall in the operating room. That way, as I'm operating, I can refer to it so there can never be a miscommunication about the goal," says Dr. Daniel Becker, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Sewell, N.J., who specializes in rhinoplasty.

Joan Skotletski-Fulmer, who was one of Becker's patients, says that she was nervous about how a digital photo would translate into a real-life nose. "It was hard to visualize," she recalls. "You have a little bit of anxiety because there's no going back. But I really trusted Dr. Becker's judgment. I think that's a key factor."

What should you expect with rhinoplasty? Well for starters, don't expect an inexpensive procedure.

The national average surgeon fee for a rhinoplasty in 2004 was \$4,047, according to the ASAPS. The operating room and anesthesia, as well as any other services, were extra.

Also, you can expect some post-operative pain. The bruising and most of the swelling around your eyes should be gone within a few weeks.

says that her biggest complaint was having to breathe

out of her mouth for a few days until her stuffy nose cleared up.

You should feel comfortable enough to resume your social life within a few weeks after the surgery. Your nose, however, may continue to subtly settle into its new shape for a year or more. Says Rudkin, "Although surgery has advanced in its techniques, human biology hasn't changed. We still have to allow time to heal."

The Do-Over

Most rhinoplasty patients are happy with their newly designed nose, surgeons say. But they caution that as many as 15 percent of patients are disgruntled enough with their results to ask for a touch-up. The problem is usually that too much or too little tissue was removed from the nose, or the nose is asymmetrical.

a 50-year-old Pittsburgh, Penn., resident who did not want her last name revealed for professional reasons, waited 20 years to have a faulty rhinoplasty corrected. She says that within a few years of her initial surgery, the top of her nose just above the tip began to look indented, and the tip itself angled upward. She also had difficulty breathing through her right nostril.

Paula feared that a second surgery could

make matters worse. Finally last year, she asked Sewell, N.J., plastic surgeon Dr. Daniel Becker (who was not her original surgeon) to perform a revision procedure.

"There was too much cartilage in the tip of her nose. I shortened the cartilages to bring the tip into balance with the rest of her nose, then strengthened the cartilage that was left," says Becker.

was thrilled with the results even before she looked into a mirror. "I knew right away that it was a good job because I could feel the air coming into my right nostril," she says. To others who are less than satisfied with their nose jobs, offers this advice: "If you have something that really needs to be addressed, find a way to do it. It's so worth it to have it behind you." —J.A.

