

ask the doctor

Dr. Ayoub Sayeg answers a reader's question about teenagers and plastic surgery.

Q *My teenager has begun to ask me about plastic surgery. Is this too young of an age?*

– D.M., Royal Oak

A Dear D.M. –

Plastic surgery is much more prevalent in the adult population. Over the last 10 years, teenagers are slowly increasing their numbers in outpatient plastic surgery procedures. The reasons for this are multi-fold.

First, plastic surgery is much more acceptable not only in the adult population but also in the teenage years. It seems all of the young Hollywood stars have had some kind of plastic surgery, making patients feel it is safe, trendy and more importantly, acceptable. Second, complications are very low and recovery time much shorter and less painful. Third, plastic surgery is much more affordable than it used to be.

Teenagers in this day and age are under tremendous pressures to succeed. Those teenage years sometimes define the rest of their lives. Any edge – within reason – can help a teenager compete better, feel more confident, become more physically active and attractiveness can be an asset.

The two most common teenage surgeries are rhinoplasty and breast reductions. The nose stops growing at about the age of 16. Sometimes prominent, deviated or cosmetically unacceptable noses can be fixed at an age where the resultant outcome gives a teenager tremendous self esteem and confidence. So in this one case, a rhinoplasty is acceptable and

many teenagers are eager to have the surgery.

Another example is large breasts in teenage girls. Once puberty hits, a young lady may become more self-conscious of her body as it transforms into a woman. With large breasts, they may feel more neck, back or shoulder pain. They may be athletic and now they tire more or are unable to participate in some physical activities. Then a breast reduction done in a minimally invasive way may be the answer. But patients are cautioned that the breast size will increase with weight gain or pregnancy and any surgeries may require revisions in the future.

Obesity has become a major epidemic in the teenage population. In fact a lot of parents try to use plastic surgery as a means of weight loss. This is not the answer.

Obesity brings about many problems for patients. A disproportionate body – whether it is larger breasts in males or females, redundant skin or increased fat in the body may make the patient's self-esteem suffer. Also, being overweight may decrease physical activity levels which are needed for both weight loss and overall better health.

Unfortunately, plastic surgery is not the answer in these types of patients because the main problem (overweight) has not been treated and you are trying to fix the end results of obesity. In some cases, these patients might do better with bariatric surgeries and once the weight is controlled be eligible for reconstructive surgery.

Teenagers today are not given as much credit as they deserve. When it comes to plastic surgery education, patience and common sense, as well as listening to the complaints they have, are the best ways to deal with teenagers.



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If you would like to submit a medical question to "Ask the Doctor", please email your question to: askthedoc@healthandleisureonline.com

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Many times, simply waiting until he or she is of legal age to consent to surgery allows the teenager time to mature, grow wiser and be more comfortable with all their decisions. However, some plastic surgery procedures are safely done in the teenage population, and balance should always be the goal.

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