

The good age guide to cosmetic surgery

LEAH HARDY, Daily Mail - 27th January 2003

With cosmetic surgery, timing is everything.

'I see women with terribly saggy faces asking if they are too young for a facelift, when it's already too late,' says surgeon Alex Karidis, of the St John and St Elizabeth Hospital, London.

'Then there are women in their 20s asking for liposuction they are too young for.'

So when is the right time for cosmetic surgery? Here, we give you a top-to-toe guide.

Forehead

PROCEDURE: Botox £250

OPTIMUM AGE: 35+

Dermatologist and Botox expert Dr Hilary Allan, of the Woodford Medical Clinic in Harley Street and Essex, says: 'You don't develop permanent wrinkles until your late 30s or early 40s, so I wouldn't recommend Botox earlier than this.' Botox is best used only for lines that remain when the face is at rest.

Eyes

PROCEDURE: Eye lift £3,500



OPTIMUM AGE: 40

PROCEDURE: Eye Bag surgery £2,200

OPTIMUM AGE: 19+

Harley Street surgeon Jan Stanek says: 'Lifting sagging eyelids or removing eye bags can make a big difference to your looks. Most patients come to me in their early 40s. But some inherit large eyebags, and the earlier these go, the better.'

Nose

PROCEDURE: Rhinoplasty £3,700

OPTIMUM AGE: 20+

'You should perform a rhinoplasty only when the facial bones have stopped growing,' says Jan Stanek, 'normally around 18 in women, and 19 in men. It's a good idea to do it when young because the skin "drapes" better than older skin, readapting itself fast to the changed structure. It also seems pointless to delay the operation if you are not happy with your nose. I would suggest an upper age limit of around 50, before the skin becomes too lax.'

Face

PROCEDURE: Facelift £6,000

OPTIMUM AGE: 45

'Why wait until you look terrible to have a facelift?' says surgeon Alex Karidis. 'Do it early enough and people will say you look rested, without even noticing you've had surgery.' Jan Stanek agrees: 'Most women have a facelift in their 50s or 60s, but in your 40s, your skin is still quite elastic, so the result is likely to be better.'

Lips

PROCEDURE: Lip enhancement £300



OPTIMUM AGE: 37

'There are two reasons to get lip enhancement,' says Dr Patrick Bowler. 'One is young women who want lips like Angelina Jolie, the other is older women who have found their lips thinning with age. The last group make up nearly all my patients.' Surgeons agree that lips start thinning from your late 20s, but it is not until your mid to late 30s that the effect is noticeable.

Breasts

PROCEDURE: Breast implants £4,000

OPTIMUM AGE: 25

PROCEDURE: Breast uplift £3,500

OPTIMUM AGE: 45

'Implants last only around 15 years - less if there are complications, such as hardening,' says Alex Karidis. 'Most patients are aged 25 to 28. I wouldn't normally give implants to girls under 18 because it is important to wait until the breasts stop developing. Fifty is the upper limit.' If the problem is sagging, a breast uplift, with or without implants, is needed, says Karidis, but only after the patient has finished having children.

Stomach

PROCEDURE: Tummy tuck £5,000

OPTIMUM AGE: 35+

Surgeons agree you should not have a tummy tuck until you've had your last child.

'Pregnancy makes the surgery pointless because you'll stretch everything again,' says Jan Stanek. Having a tummy tuck is a last resort - and for women who have had several children. It is fairly major surgery and you need to be fit, so Stanek prefers not to perform it on anyone older than their 60s, and very rarely for anyone under 35.

Hands

PROCEDURE: Age spots, £250 a session

OPTIMUM AGE: 50+

'Using Intense Pulsed Light technology, a kind of gentle laser treatment, I can reduce age spots by around 50 per cent in one treatment, and up to 80 per cent in three to four sessions,' says Dr Patrick Bowler, of The Courthouse clinic in Harley Street. 'You are never too old to have age spots taken off your hands.'

Hips and thighs

PROCEDURE: Liposuction £4,000

OPTIMUM AGE: 30-35

'I don't usually see anyone under 30 who needs liposuction,' says Karidis, 'except a few women who inherit really pronounced saddlebags. Generally, before this age, diet and exercise can do more than surgery ever could. On the other hand, the younger and more elastic the skin, the better the result because the skin has to snap back over the new, slimmer shape.'

Skin

PROCEDURE: Laser skin resurfacing, £2,500

OPTIMUM AGE: 50

PROCEDURE: Photorejuvenation, £450 per treatment

OPTIMUM AGE: 35

'Laser skin resurfacing is a very aggressive procedure,' says Dr Hilary Allan. 'It's not worth doing until you are in your early 50s. Instead, I use photorejuvenation, which helps improve sun damage, skin texture and red veins from the 20s onwards. Along with Botox, it can mean you don't ever need a facelift.'