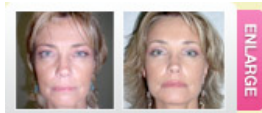


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Plastic Surgery Demand Rising Among Minority Groups

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An increasing number of patients from various minority groups are requesting plastic surgery-and specifying that they do not want to alter their ethnic appearance, leading to some big changes in the way certain procedures are performed.

In the past, plastic surgeons worked strictly to an Anglo-Saxon definition of beauty, with medical schools and textbooks giving only Caucasian examples and not acknowledging ethnic differences in, say, rhinoplasty. Now, driven by demand from minority patients, the younger generation of American plastic surgeons are creating techniques that will allow patients to address perceived flaws while retaining their racial identity.

The demand for maintaining an ethnic appearance affects many procedures commonly performed by plastic surgeons. For instance, while performing rhinoplasty on an African-American, the surgeon will avoid creating a pointed tip, which many feel looks too European. More doctors are giving eyelifts to Asian patients without removing as much fat near the lower lid, and microdermabrasion is being used more commonly correct acne scars in African-American clients, since it does not lighten the skin like chemical peeling.

"More and more surgeons are being asked to do something that's going to enhance someone's look without erasing [ethnic identity]." claims Dr. Julius Few, a professor of plastic surgery at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. Dr. Few, who is African-American, says that when he entered medical school in 1988, ethnic identity in plastic surgery "was a subject that was not even close to being talked about," with textbooks containing only examples of European looking features. Today, medical journals and textbooks are beginning to include examples of the new techniques and procedures designed to preserve ethnicity.

The number of procedures performed on minority patients quadrupled between 1997 and 2002, with minorities now getting nearly 19 percent of all cosmetic procedures performed in the United States. Most of them are seeking subtler changes in their looks than previous patients-aiming for features that are younger or differently proportioned, without looking "Caucasian".

Dr. Edmund Kwan, a plastic surgeon in New York City, says that most of his Asian American patients are asking him to preserve the ethnicity of their features, in contrast to his experiences a few years ago. Now, only about one in 20 are attempting to appear more Western. "Preserving ethnicity is the biggest concern of Asians having plastic surgery," Dr. Kwan claims.

This is true of Hispanics as well. Over the past ten years, Dr. Renalto Saltz has noticed more Hispanic Americans seeking buttocks implants, a procedure he thought of as more popular in Rio de Janeiro than his Salt Lake City plastic surgery practice. Calling this move "the breakdown of the beauty barrier" he cites increasing access to foreign media and expanding standards of beauty.

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