



## You've made an appointment - what happens next?

**If you're considering a cosmetic surgical procedure, you will probably need at least two preoperative consultations to discuss it. You will probably have taken a long time to think about what you're looking for and will usually have researched it or talked to people who have had similar operations.**

There is a lot of information on the Internet, but many people find this overwhelming and confusing. As a plastic surgeon, my first job is to give my patients as much information as they need to understand the decisions they need to make. I do this in two stages. At our first consultation, I give you an overview of the operation and spell out how it applies to you. At our second meeting, I'll take you through a full surgical plan, personalised to suit your individual needs and wishes. This is your operation, and I want you to feel informed and in control of what's happening.

### **The first consultation**

I start by taking a detailed history about your problem as you see it. I'll also ask some more general questions to understand your motivations, expectation and so on. It's important that I establish your full medical history, including a list of any medications that you're taking; this helps me to identify the safest way to carry out any given procedure. There will then be a physical examination, which is an opportunity for me to assess how you feel about your problem – and to consider the most effective surgical options.

I will then summarise for you the current techniques available for the operation we have been discussing. I will let you know what the latest trends and innovations are and dispel some of the myths. I'll also highlight how your personal or medical history might affect how the operation is done. I always look at people to see whether they are good candidates for an operation; I want you to take from the first consultation an honest assessment of how well the operation will work for you. I also make sure you know what's involved in terms of time in theatre, hospital stay, recovery time, and any side-effects or risks.

Of course, it's easy to feel overloaded with information at this stage. I'll try and keep the message clear so that you understand what the important issues are and can make an informed decision about whether you want to go ahead. I will also give you some detailed information to take away to help you digest what I have said. If you want to continue, our Practice Manager Sue can arrange a second consultation where we would go into your operation in more detail.

### **The second consultation**

Whether you've already decided to proceed or are still pondering, this stage gives you an opportunity to go through the issues discussed last time and ask any questions. If you are keen to proceed and have a date set for your surgery, I use this meeting as a planning consultation. During this, we would discuss some of the finer details of the surgery. It's an opportunity for me to take the detailed measurements needed to fine-tune the surgical plan to suit your needs and to make decide exactly how to operate in terms of scar placement, implant size and so on.



I will also talk to you about the process you're about to embark on. I'll explain what happens on the day of your surgery and give you an idea of the steps involved along the way, the timing of your surgery and postoperative stay. I find this demystifies the process somewhat and makes it feel less intimidating, but it also helps with planning recovery and what you need to do to prepare your home, childcare and time off work.

### **Summary**

Cosmetic surgery is about delivering the highest quality results. But in my view, it's just as important to make your journey through the treatment as pleasant as it can be. To make this happen, it's vital that you feel in control of the process and that you fully understand why some of the technical decisions are made. This is one of the advantages of cosmetic surgery in that the operations are highly visual. You can see how their operation works and I can explain why certain steps or decisions may be necessary. This is about shared decisions: you and I should both feel comfortable with what we're trying to achieve, and confident that your expectations can be met.

You will never be rushed into making a decision about anything. If you take your time to think about the decisions we are making, you will feel more positive towards the process and the outcome. It's only natural to feel somewhat nervous on the day of surgery; however, by working together through every stage and decision, you should arrive feeling more excited than anxious. After all, cosmetic surgery is designed to transform both the way you look and how you feel about your life.