

Plastic Surgeon Spotlight

Interview with Dr. J. Timothy Katzen

by Niloo E Sarabi



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Why did you choose post-bariatric plastic surgery?

I care about my post-bariatric patients and I enjoy helping them. It is wonderful to see the dramatic results of the plastic surgery and how they impact the patients' personal and social lives. After plastic surgery, I see my patients looking better and feeling better about themselves. I love helping my patients complete the second part of their weight loss journey.

What part of your practice is dedicated to post-bariatric plastic surgery and what are the most common procedures you perform?

Approximately 95 percent of my practice is dedicated to post-bariatric plastic surgery. The most common procedure that I perform is the power lift or circumferential body lift. It is an incision that goes around the entire beltline, and I take out that middle doughnut of excess skin and fat. In addition to the power lift, I perform leg lifts, arm lifts, neck lifts and face lifts. I also perform breast reconstruction, which usually includes breast lifts, and breast augmentations in women and breast reductions in men.

Tell me about the program you offer to your post-bariatric patients.

I offer a comprehensive plastic surgery program to my post-bariatric patients. On staff, I have a full-time internist, physician assistant, psychologist, registered nurse, chiropractor and dentist. Each is thoroughly involved in my practice. I have eight staff members that specialize in obtaining insurance authorizations. We also have a full line of pre-operative vitamins, pre-operative and post-operative protein drinks and post-operative plastic surgery garments.

Do you offer support groups for your post-bariatric patients?

I lead monthly support groups. These meetings are designed for individuals who are considering plastic surgery. Topics include power lifts, leg lifts, arm lifts, breast reconstruction, neck lifts, face lifts, preoperative optimization, psychology of plastic surgery and how to get back into dating after plastic surgery. Every two weeks, I spend an hour in online patient chat rooms. In addition, I have my own active online plastic surgery chat room where patients can ask questions of me, my staff and my previous patients.

What are some of the challenges you face with regard to your post-bariatric patients?

The insurance companies are rejecting more procedures now than they used to approve in the past. We used to get about 80 percent approval from the insurance companies, while now we are down to less than 60 percent. The procedures that I would have thought would be automatically approved are being rejected mainly because insurance companies are getting flooded with requests for plastic surgery after patients undergo gastric bypass surgery. That is why we ask that our patients meticulously document their chronic infections and the way their excess skin interferes with their personal hygiene and daily activities. Another challenge for me is post-operative wound healing. Gastric bypass patients do not absorb all the necessary vitamins and micronutrients, so they are more prone to wound breakdown and wound infections. That is why having a nutritionist is so essential to my practice. Our other challenge is safety. Most plastic surgeons agree that multiple surgeries are safer than one lengthy operation. Because of my multiple staging of plastic surgery, I have a very busy practice and often operate six days a week.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?

I enjoy seeing my patients complete their weight loss journey and come out of their shells. I love how my patients get on with their lives after plastic surgery as healthy individuals, both physically and emotionally.

What are your personal hobbies and activities?

I enjoy scuba diving, underwater photography and watching my daughter dance.