

Ask Dr. Katzen



Dear Dr. Katzen,

I am seriously thinking of gastric bypass surgery. Part of my decision depends on whether I could get good results from plastic surgery afterwards. I know that I would need or want plastic surgery after losing weight with gastric bypass surgery. I am in my mid-50s. Can a person my age obtain good results in regards to recovery, healing and cosmetic result?

B.

Dear B.,

Congratulations, your thought process is excellent. Most patients think that by just losing weight they will have the body of their dreams. Unfortunately, after weight loss patients develop a whole new set of issues. Usually, these issues are focused around excess skin and rashes. These issues are treated with reconstructive plastic surgery. I congratulate you on realizing that weight loss is a two-part journey—first lose the fat with gastric bypass, then lose the skin with plastic surgery.

Since I have not examined you and you only say you are in your mid-50s, your question is difficult for me to answer without a personal consultation. Your

final results are going to depend on 3 key elements—your health, your bariatric surgeon, and your plastic surgeon. Your health is multi-factorial and includes your weight, healing capacity, history of diabetes, history of hypertension, smoking history and nutritional status. Your bariatric surgeon is essential. Choose a bariatric surgeon who has performed thousands of gastric bypasses. Do not choose someone who just completed his or her training. If necessary, fly out of state. Your final result is up to the plastic surgeon you choose. See my answer to Skeeter in this issue for more advice about choosing a plastic surgeon.

Dear Dr. Katzen,

As a weight loss surgery (WLS) patient, I am working out before and after surgery to minimize the need for plastic surgery. Is there anything I can do to keep from needing as much done? I have had my share of surgeries and I am not looking forward to too many more. Are there any exercises or anything I can do to help my situation? I know I will need a breast reduction and maybe a tummy tuck. What about my butt, thighs and arms?

Kira

Dear Kira,

Sorry, Kira. There are no specific exercises to minimize the need for plastic surgery. However, I encourage all my patients to exercise, eat right and take their vitamins and iron. Above all, if you smoke, quit. Smoking considerably impacts overall healing and can cause catastrophic wound healing problems.

There are three key anatomical features affected after weight loss of any kind. First, fat cells are reduced or eliminated by weight loss. Secondly, muscles shrink because they do not have to support as much weight. Thirdly, the skin tries to recoil. Usually, the fat stays away. With good right and exercise, muscle mass can increase; however, muscle mass does not completely fill the void left by the missing fat, nor would we want it to fill the void! Skin recoil is multi-variable and depends on your age, other medical conditions, amount of stretch and your genetics, to mention just a few factors. Skin recoil is almost impossible to predict or control. That is why reconstructive plastic surgery is often a necessary component to the completion of the weight loss journey.

Dear Dr. Katzen,

Even though I have not yet had WLS, I will be searching for a plastic surgeon after the weight loss. How can I be sure that I pick a good surgeon? I have heard anyone can hang a shingle advertising plastic surgery. What should I look for when shopping for a surgeon? I would hate to go through WLS and be deformed by someone who hasn't the experience or skills.

Skeeter

Dear Skeeter,

Choosing a plastic surgeon is not simple task. There are two main factors patients generally rely on when choose a plastic surgeon: subjective and objective analysis. The best way to choose a surgeon depends on a carefully balance of the two.

Subjective analysis is how you feel about your plastic surgeon. Can you trust the surgeon? Do you have a good feeling about the surgeon? Is he or she approachable? Does he or she treat you like a person, or a number? Do you like the surgeon? Can the surgeon sympathize with you? Is he or she a good listener? Does the surgeon seem genuine? Does he or she make sense? Can you talk to the surgeon? Does the surgeon convey honesty? Does the surgeon have a good bedside manner? Is the waiting room full of patients just like you?

Objective analysis is a little easier. First, check your doctor's credentials. Your plastic surgeon should be board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (Check www.plasticsurgery.org) and should be a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (Check www.facs.org). The surgeon should have admitting privileges in plastic surgery at a surrounding reputable hospital. Then, check your plastic surgeon's results. Ask to see before and after pictures. Are any of the patients just like you? Ask to speak with previous patients. Can you relate with any of these patients? How long has the surgeon been performing these procedures? How many has he or she done? Does the surgeon enjoy performing these procedures? What percentage of his cases gets insurance approval? Ask for surgeon feedback in the OH chat rooms. Check out the surgeon's rating on www.obesityhelp.com.

Your plastic surgeon's experience is essential. You should choose a plastic surgeon whose entire practice focuses on reconstructive plastic surgery after weight loss. I do not recommend going price shopping, or going outside the United States. Every good plastic surgeon with a busy practice will have some complications, and most insurance plans do not cover medical complications outside the United States. Choose a plastic surgeon that has performed your selected surgery at least 50 times.



Thanks to all of you who have emailed me your question. I look forward to answering more of them in the next issue of OH Magazine. If you haven't yet sent your question, I invite you to email me today.

Sincerely, Dr. Katzen

Congratulations, you got rid of the fat! Now, get rid of the extra skin by letting Dr. Katzen help you to complete your weight loss journey. 100 percent of Dr. Katzen's practice is devoted to reconstructive plastic surgery after weight loss. Dr. Katzen has a multi-disciplinary team to address the many issues concerning weight loss. Depending on your insurance carrier, we have an 80 percent rate of insurance approval. Please visit www.BodyByKatzen.com and call 1-888-KATZEN-0 for a consultation.

We want to hear from you! Do you have a question about plastic surgery for Dr. Katzen? Send your email to AskDrKatzen@obesityhelp.com