

Plastic Surgery and Medical Complications



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Plastic surgery is becoming the boom of the era due to the evolution seen in this field. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, Cosmetic surgery has reached a \$10.1 billion business each year in the U.S. alone with an increase of 5% in number of procedures per year.

Having plastic surgery does not always end up with a happy ending. It is always associated with the potential of having complications that can be life threatening in some cases.

In general, due to the progression seen in this field and the new techniques used, procedures are somehow considered to be safe. However, complications are seen and some can be with potential risks on life but the degree of risk depends on several factors like the type of surgery, the patients' health and medical problems, and the experience of the surgeon performing the procedure.

Patients with history of cardiovascular disease, lung disease or diabetes have higher risk to develop pneumonia, stroke, thromboembolic events and even heart attacks. (1-2)

Moreover, some of the complications are common to all surgeries and can be related to the burden of surgery or anesthesia, including risk of allergies, infections, bleeding, wound complications, nerve damage, and cardiac complications. (3-4)

Complications Related to Plastic Surgery

When it comes to plastic surgery, some complications seem to be more frequent or more prone to take place. We can classify them into early (less than 30days) and

late (more than 30 days) complications. Among the most commonly reported complications we have infections. Infections cause around 30% of all complications, but that number is subject to variation depending on the sterility of the surgery and operating room. It can be local infection at the surgical site which may worsen scarring and in some cases require more corrective surgeries, and in more severe cases it can disseminate into the blood causing bacteremia and even sepsis requiring intensive care. (5)

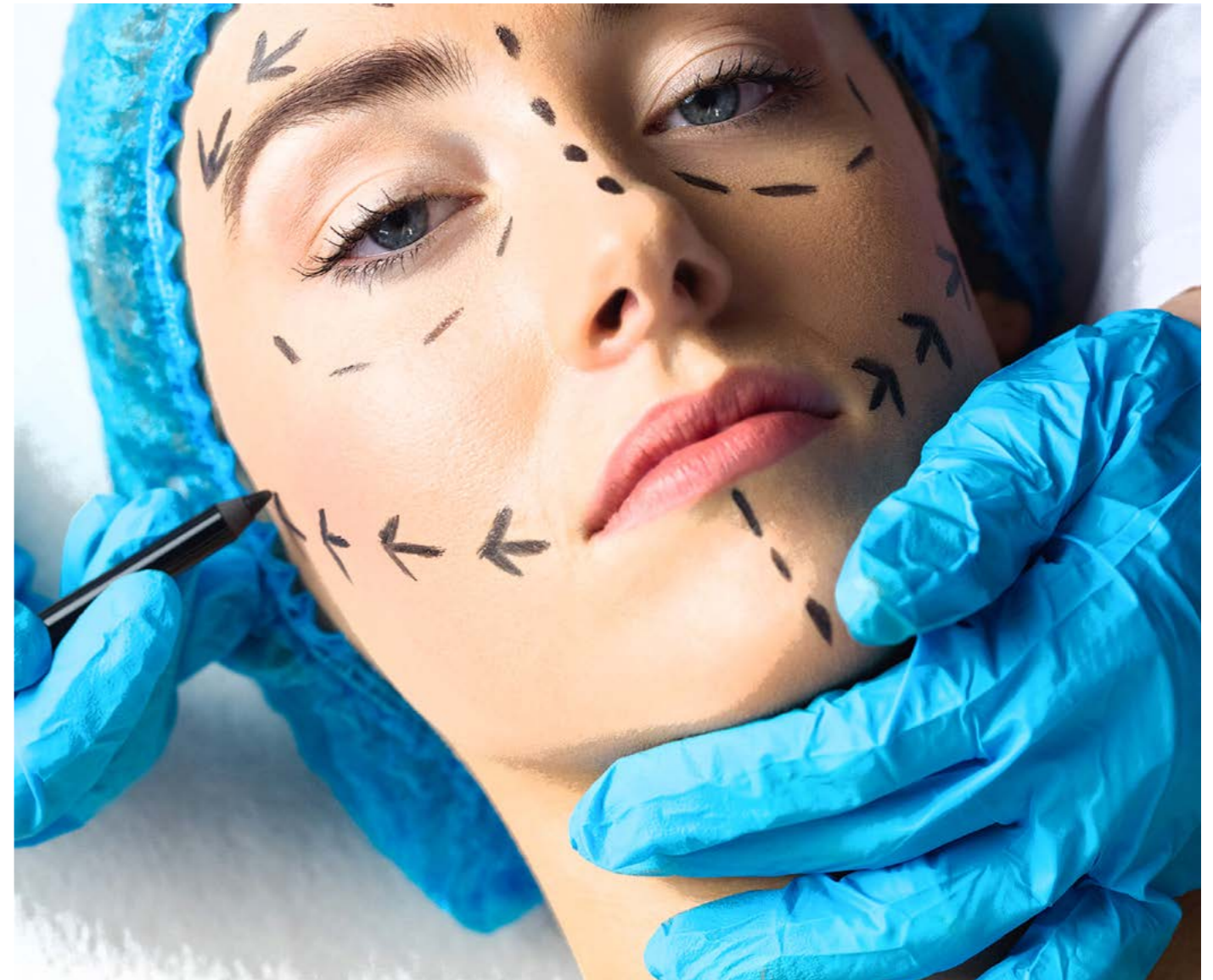
Another frequent complication seen is bleeding and hematoma formation. Bleeding by itself can be minimal requiring only follow up, but in more advanced cases it can lead to the need of blood transfusions and increase the length of hospital stay. As for the management of hematoma, repeated surgical procedure may be required sometimes to evacuate the blood and to control the bleeding if still persisting. (6)

Furthermore, some other complications that are less frequent but yet commonly seen, we have the post-surgical scarring and skin breakdown that may occur after surgery recovery and skin healing that may require some surgical intervention. Along with chronic pain and numbness that is believed to be secondary to nerve compression or even nerve damage that may be permanent and impairing patient's life.

However, patients should know that the risk of complications is not always due to the operation or surgeon, but rather they might have a role in increasing it. Studies have shown that smoking has impact on the results seen after cosmetic surgeries. Worsening scarring and delaying wound healing are being lately correlated to be smoking-related and are seen more frequently in smoker when compared to non-smokers.(7) And it is believed to be related to nicotine, carbon monoxide and toxins in blood affecting perfusion of skin after surgeries.

Not to mention the increased incidence of post anesthesia complications as aspiration pneumonia, pulmonary embolisms and deep vein thrombosis or uncontrolled hypertension. (8)

In conclusion, as all surgeries, plastic surgeries contain risks and complications that patients should be aware of and should be told before undergoing any procedure. In the



end the goal of cosmetic surgery is to improve a person's appearance and not making it worse, thus improving person appearance and self-esteem

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