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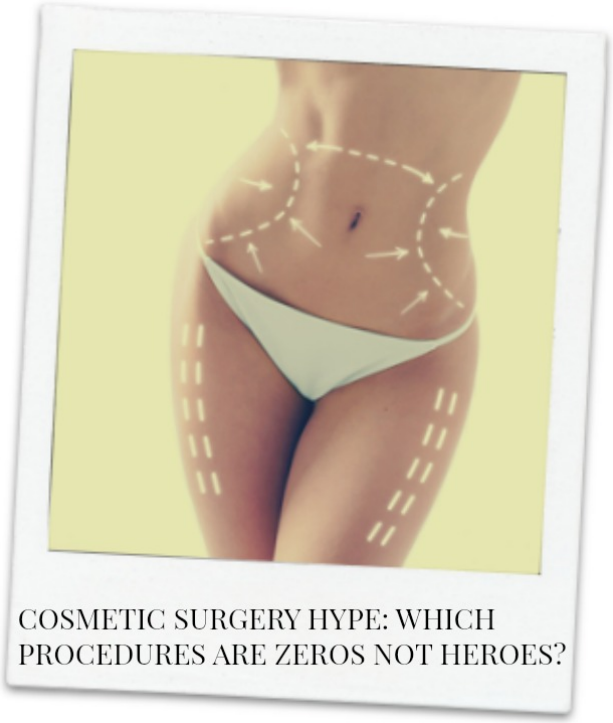

COSMETIC SURGERY HYPE: WHICH PROCEDURES ARE ZEROS NOT HEROES?

The name of the game today in cosmetic surgery is fast and non-invasive. The reasons are obvious. Nobody wants to be bedridden out of work and off the social grid as they recover. Fast results of a thinner, tighter, younger look within an hour is very alluring. How many of these seemingly miracle procedures actually do what they claim to? We turned to board certified Philadelphia plastic surgeon **Dr. Kirk Brandow** to breakdown cosmetic surgery hype; which procedures are zeros not heroes.

Kybella

This injection is made of deoxycholic acid, which is actually produced by the body naturally to absorb fat. The synthetic version is a fat cell destroyer injected into the pocket of fat below the chin. So far this is the only location on the body for which Kybella is FDA-approved. Dr. Brandow cautions, “Kybella may shrink fat but it’s also an acid which could burn the skin and cause an abscess or an open wound if placed too close to the skin. Equally important is that it can also destroy the deeper tissues as well which could lead to a dent just under the chin.” Another issue with Kybella according to Dr. Brandow is potential for ‘redistribution of fat’ to other areas of the neck when people gain weight, over time. “The loss of fat in this focused, Kybella, injected spot will look odd when areas around it are heavier looking.”

Instabreast

If you’ve ever considered a breast augmentation, it’s not hard to understand the appeal of “test-driving” a pair of implants for a day. This “try it before you buy it” procedure called Instabreast takes about twenty minutes in office. A saline solution is injected into the breasts until they are enlarged to the desired size. Surgeons who offer the procedure claim that it takes the guesswork out of planning an augmentation by providing patients with 24 hours of experience with larger breasts.

“This is crazy!!” says Dr. Brandow. “How do you anesthetize the breast before you shoot in the saline? Wouldn’t this hurt? Just the thought of it would scare off my patients. Additionally, implants on top of the muscle versus under the muscle look different and the size you use on top looks totally different from the one you would use under the muscle.” Dr. Brandow questions the safety of injecting saline under the muscle in office with a local anesthetic. “I would say it’s a recipe for a punctured lung! Additionally, I would love to know how a surgeon inflates a young, tight skinned, A- cup woman who wants a full C- cup, without causing a lot of pain during that injection.”

Mesotherapy and Lipodissolve as a Fat Dissolver

Several cosmetic surgeons and dermatologists agree that if there is one procedure to avoid when shopping for a slimmer look, it's one called lipodissolve, a shot that claims to dissolve away stubborn fat deposits. This shot is often part of "mesotherapy;" a shallow injection of a cocktail of substances using a fine needle. "There is really not a single scientific study to show that it definitely works," says Dr. Brandow. Are these chemicals safe when injected into fat? What happens to this fat? Where does it go? Dr. Brandow feels lipodissolve is an ill-advised treatment. "This is a non-FDA approved use of a material called lipostabil, which can dissolve fat and other structures however, it can cause pain, swelling, hard lumps, ulceration of the skin, and contour irregularities. None of the pharmaceuticals used for injection are FDA approved."

Laser Liposuction

It seems like everything that has the word "laser" in it today is perceived as a state-of-the-art breakthrough, but in this case, using laser to assist in liposuction is not necessarily so. Laser liposuction uses lasers to liquefy the fat before it is removed, making it easier to vacuum out and they may also stimulate the production of collagen and elastin, which results in firmer, tighter, and smoother skin. Lasers may also coagulate small blood vessels in the area, which translates to less bruising. What's the downside? Dr. Brandow points out that, "There is greater risk of burning and therefore, pain. Laser liposuction, Smartlipo and similar procedures add both time and money to the typical technique.