

Torn Between Cosmetic and Plastic Surgeon: Who to Choose?

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Many times, people use the terms "plastic surgeon" and "cosmetic surgeon" to mean the same thing. In reality, however, these are two similar, yet different, types of doctors who perform work in the same relative field. [Both cosmetic and plastic surgeons](#) dedicate their lives to making men and women look and feel better about themselves, but there are differences between the two.



The main difference between cosmetic and plastic surgery is that cosmetic surgery is totally elective and intended more to help a person's image or feelings about herself, whereas plastic surgery does the same sort of thing with a major focus on reconstruction of problems caused by abnormalities, infections, diseases, traumatic injury or birth defects. A person wanting to change the shape of her nose or have breast augmentation for personal reasons should see a cosmetic surgeon, while a child born with a cleft palate or a woman facing reconstructive breast surgery following a mastectomy would see a plastic surgeon.

Doctors in the field of "cosmetic surgery" and medicine include those who deal with the head, neck and body, such as dermatologists, facial surgeons, oral surgeons and even plastic surgeons, since cosmetic surgeons perform many of the same procedures for different reasons. Cosmetic surgeons undergo much of the same training as plastic surgeons, since there is no program in the U.S. dedicated 100 percent to cosmetic surgery as a profession. Trained plastic surgeons can enter the field of cosmetic surgery following completion of their residency; however, not all plastic surgeons are trained in many basic cosmetic surgical or medical procedures as their training does not require it.

If you are in need of a plastic surgeon, it is imperative that you make sure the doctor you choose is board certified. Board certification means the doctor has completed medical school and a residency as well as an in depth residency in the world of cosmetic procedures. Make sure the doctor you choose is well trained in the specific procedural area you require. The same is true if you need a cosmetic surgeon for an aesthetic procedure - not all cosmetic surgery professionals are trained and proficient in the same areas. Look only to the [American Board of Plastic Surgery](#) to make sure the surgeons you are considering are certified. Read a more thorough explanation of board certification [here](#).

It is highly important to use a board certified plastic surgeon for any procedure, no matter how small or minor it seems. A board certified surgeon has successfully passed an extensive and intensive review by other qualified doctors in the field, and has proven that education and training have made that doctor completely capable of performing procedures. Certification must be renewed every 10 years, meaning that a very experienced and certified doctor has proven time and time again that he is qualified to continue his practice. Should a person choose a plastic surgeon who is not board certified, she is figuratively "rolling the dice" as to whether the doctor has been properly trained. The procedure might not be as successful as it could be, had the doctor been board certified.