

## The Meaning of Board Certification

When you consider plastic surgery, our desire is that the following information will help you to evaluate which doctor you should see. Many people seeking plastic surgery or any other type of medical treatment are aware that they should look for "board certification" among the credentials of their plastic surgeon or other physician. Most people are not aware of exactly what this means, and what is involved in a physician becoming board certified. We believe all patients need to have this information to make informed choices in their search for the right plastic surgeon/physician.

Many patients are surprised to learn that **any** licensed medical doctor, regardless of training, can **legally** perform plastic surgery and call her or himself a plastic surgeon. Numerous doctors listed under the title of "Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in Yellow Pages from all over the country, have **not** completed an approved residency in plastic surgery.

The American board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is the national agency, whose function is to oversee sub-specialty boards. Over the years more than 100 medical specialties or subspecialties have submitted to the ABMS for certification, but only 24 have met their strict educational and examination criteria. Plastic Surgery is one of the 24.

The American Board of Plastic Surgery is the evaluating body that is responsible for determining and evaluating the training and certification of plastic and reconstructive surgeons. It is the **only** plastic surgery board approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties at this point in time.

In order to become certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, a surgeon must first complete an approved residency in plastic surgery, then pass a written qualifying examination, and then an oral certifying examination.

There are other surgeons, besides plastic surgeons, who have the ability and experience, which enable them to do cosmetic surgery. Otolaryngologists (Ear Nose and Throat specialists) perform nose surgery, hair transplant surgery, and facial plastic surgery; ophthalmologist (eye specialists) do eyelid surgery; and specially trained dermatologists do dermabrasion, laser skin surgery, and more recently, liposuction.

There are also boards other than the American Board of Plastic Surgery, which provide certification for other surgeons who perform cosmetic surgery. A few

of the boards, which are not certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), include:

Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Oculoplastic Surgery

Dermatological Surgery

Cosmetic Surgery

Oral and Maxillofacial Cosmetic Surgery

Liposuction Surgery

Simply being "board certified" can have a variety of meanings. By knowing exactly which board has certified your surgeon, and whether or not the American Board of Medical Specialties recognizes that board, you will better understand your surgeon's training and qualifications. You may call the ABMS 1-800-776-2378 to see if the American Board of Plastic Surgery certifies your surgeon. Give them the name of your physician or surgeon and they will tell you if and when he or she has certified by one of the ABMS recognized boards. You can also find the names of board certified plastic surgeons, listed by state and city, in the Directory of Medical Specialists, published by Marquis Who's Who, and available in most public libraries. You may also refer to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons or their website for this information.

Training and certification are important but are not the only things you should consider when choosing a plastic surgeon. Your final choice should be based upon many factors. Training, certification, experience, ability, and personality are all-important. **Get to know your surgeon.**

Is he/she honest?

Are her/his credentials and certification legitimate?

How experienced is she/he?

Does he/she care about you as a person or is he/she selling plastic surgery?

Do you get along?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Your ultimate decision is important. You deserve a well-trained, qualified, experienced and caring plastic surgeon.

## How to choose a Plastic Surgeon for Cosmetic Surgery

Choosing to have cosmetic (aesthetic) plastic surgery is a very personal decision. Millions of people each year successfully undergo cosmetic surgery and enjoy the results of an enhanced appearance. Whether cosmetic surgery is right for you depends on many factors. We hope that the following information will help you take the first steps toward making an informed decision about cosmetic plastic surgery. It will discuss the importance of selecting a qualified surgeon and give you an idea of what to expect from your initial consultation.

The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) is the first and only plastic surgery organization devoted entirely to the advancement of cosmetic surgery. Founded in 1967, ASAPS has a membership of more than 1900 plastic surgeons and is recognized throughout the world as the authoritative source for cosmetic surgery education. ASAPS members are known for their skill and experience in performing cosmetic surgery of the face and body. They are a select group of plastic surgeons permitted to display the ASAPS logo, shown below, as a symbol of their achievements in the field of cosmetic plastic surgery.

Members of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery are board-certified plastic surgeons. Before a doctor can be board-certified in plastic surgery, he or she must complete a minimum of five years of surgical training following medical school. This training includes an accredited plastic surgery residency program where the surgeon masters both reconstructive and cosmetic operations. After this extensive formal education, and establishment of a plastic surgery practice, the final step to board certification is the successful completion of rigorous oral and written examinations administered by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (or, in Canada, by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada).

Not every doctor who uses the title "plastic surgeon" or "cosmetic surgeon" has been trained in plastic surgery and certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. In most states, any doctor with a medical license can advertise as a plastic or cosmetic surgeon, even if the doctor has no formal surgical training.

Don't be confused by other official-sounding boards and certifications. American Board of Plastic Surgery certification indicates a surgeon's qualifications to perform reconstructive and cosmetic plastic surgery of the face and the entire body.

Members of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery have the credentials that qualify them to perform the full range of cosmetic surgery. When you select an ASAPS surgeon, you can be confident that your surgeon:

- Is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery or, in Canada, by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.
- Has been in plastic surgery practice at least three years following board certification.
- Is a member in good standing of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the society that covers the entire scope of Plastic Surgery including reconstructive surgery.
- Qualifies for hospital privileges to perform cosmetic plastic surgery.
- Has experience in a wide range of cosmetic procedures.
- Has earned Continuing Medical Education credits in cosmetic surgery and fulfills ongoing educational requirements.
- Operates in an accredited, state-licensed or Medicare-certified facility (or, in special circumstances, a facility in the process of accreditation).
- Has been recommended and approved for ASAPS membership by other qualified plastic surgeons.
- Has agreed to uphold a strict Code of Ethics, to maintain high standards of patient care and respect patients' rights.



**MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY  
FOR AESTHETIC PLASTIC SURGERY**

*The Mark of Distinction  
In Cosmetic Plastic Surgery®*