

# Plastic perfection

Business



The number of teenagers getting cosmetic surgery tripled between 1990 and 2009 (Sweeney). Some individuals get cosmetic surgery because they want to fit in, some get it because their parents want them to, and still others get it because they think it will solve their problems. As these teenagers get older, some are happy that they got surgery, some regret it, and others do not regret it but wish they had been more educated at the time they got the surgery.

The effects of cosmetic surgery on teenagers is extremely different than the effect it has on adults, and, in addition, the cosmetic surgery industry is focused, for the most part, more on money than on anything else, putting young, uneducated patients at risk. The effects of cosmetic surgery on teens is very different than the effects on adults. In general, teenagers get cosmetic surgery because they want to fit in, while adults get it so that they can stand out. Studies show that teen aged girls are more likely to be unhappy with themselves than teen aged boys; however, many teen aged boys get cosmetic surgery too. The most popular cosmetic surgery procedures performed on teenagers are rhinoplasty (nose job), otoplasty (ear surgery), and breast augmentation (Vlad and O'Connor 7).

Teenagers feel that getting cosmetic surgery will end their insecurities, make them feel better about themselves, and be more accepted by their peers.

There are no studies that prove this, though it seems to be a universal thought. From Great Britain to the United States to Taiwan, teenagers are unhappy with themselves and believe that changing one physical characteristic will change who they are and how they feel. There are many problems with this. Teenagers would rather change their bodies than their

minds, because they feel that if they change their bodies, their minds will be changed.

This, however, is not the case. Therapy is a safer option than cosmetic surgery (Cosmetic). There are very few regulations on the cosmetic surgery industry, including on who can perform surgery and concerning the age of the people who have surgeries performed on them. Teenagers' bodies are not fully formed yet, and getting cosmetic surgery can be damaging to development. There are certain physical milestones that teenagers are generally supposed to have passed, but there are no emotional milestones.

Many do not fully understand what it is that they are doing to their bodies, the risks associated with the procedures, and that the procedures are permanent. Risks for rhinoplasty, for example, are infection, loss of sense of smell, breathing obstructions, holes in the septum, etc. Risks for abdominoplasty include bleeding under the skin, blood clots, and skin loss and for breast augmentation are asymmetry of the breasts, scars around the implants, ruptured implants, and irritable bowel syndrome (Vlad and O'Connor 41-54). Other problems with cosmetic surgery are that anyone can perform it. Even surgeons who claim to be 'board certified' could have created the board that certify them. There are several national boards that are widely recognized, such as the American Board of Plastic Surgery, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, and the American Society of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Since there are multiple boards, no one board regulates the industry, so there is much confusion regarding many polices, and therefore none actually

exist (Vlad and O'Connor 34-36). In one case, women across the United States were and are currently getting cheap, illegal derriere injections. The injections are given in the homes of people, many with no experience performing surgery of any kind. The injections are made up of industrial grade silicone, often purchased from hardware stores. This silicone is not meant to be used for cosmetic surgery and there are no regulated methods for injecting it.

Women choose to get it injected illegally because it is cheaper than getting it done legally. This method of silicone injection often has fatal results. Many women are either dying from these injections, or are becoming permanently maimed. The silicone injected into the derriere can run out of the derriere and down the legs, and, if the injection needle hits a blood vessel, it can get into the bloodstream and travel to other parts of the body (Mohr). In addition to having very few regulations, cosmetic surgery is not always the choice of the teenager. Many parents push for their children to get cosmetic surgery.

In one case, an eleven year old girl received a nose job from her parents because they knew she did not like her nose (Sweeney). In other cases, mothers push their daughters to get breast implants. In one case, a girl had two operations because her mother wanted her to get them and was unhappy with the result of the first surgery (Vlad and O'Connor 31).

Teenagers are making very permanent choices to please their parents, even though they are the ones who will have to live with the effects of the surgery and any complications that may occur, not their parents. For example, in South Korea, plastic surgery has become so much the norm, some parents

are pushing their children to get procedures done so that they will look like other people.

In South Korea, the two most popular surgeries are nose and eyelid surgery. Eyelid surgery makes the eyes appear wider, supposedly giving the person a younger look. Nose surgery lengthens the nose and makes it taller (Standen). Getting plastic surgery as a teenager can cause regret later in life. Many patients realize as they get older that getting the surgery did not make them happier with themselves, and some regret getting it entirely. In addition, some plastic surgery can begin to malfunction after a certain period of time.

For instance, the average life span of breast implants is ten years. After ten years, the implants can rupture, and scar tissue can form in the breast around the implant. Cosmetic surgery is becoming more and more popular, and it is not going to go away. The cosmetic surgery industry is targeted toward adults, heightening the risks for teenagers who choose to go under the knife. The bodies of teenagers are not as developed as the bodies of adults, and teenagers are not as emotionally mature as adults are.

They might not fully understand the surgery they are undergoing and all of the risks associated with it. In addition, the plastic surgery industry is dangerously unregulated, and can cause the death of someone who is not fully informed about the procedure they are undergoing. Teenagers also might not be the person who is choosing to undergo the surgery, and might feel forced into it by a parent. The cosmetic surgery industry has greatly

improved over the last twenty years, but it still has many risks associated with it, which leaves many asking, is it worth it?