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National

# Why are more men going opting for cosmetic surgery?



By Leslie Tamura June 20, 2011

In his 50s, Joe Marek said, he felt “young and powerful.” But when he looked in the mirror, he saw a worn-out person.

Deep wrinkles lined his face, said Marek, a software engineer who lives in Laurel. His brow drooped. He had permanent bags under his eyes. The skin under his chin sagged.

Marek knew what he wanted: plastic surgery.

“It was just a matter of ‘As soon as I get the money together, I’m going to do it,’” he said. In May 2010, he got a facelift plus eyelid and nose surgery.

Marek, now 57, was part of a trend — a small trend, but one that is being eagerly followed by the nip-and-tuck industry. Men had 1.2 million cosmetic procedures last year, up 2 percent from 2009, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Still, women accounted for 91 percent of all cosmetic procedures that year.

“Men have always been lagging behind women’s acceptance of cosmetic surgery as part of their normal aging process,” said Michael Olding, chief of

plastic surgery at the George Washington University Medical Center, “but I think it’s no longer out of the norm.”

As he thought about going under the knife, Marek said, it never occurred to him that people would think it was unmanly to improve his appearance. “I think it’s more and more [for] regular guys,” he said.

Men have historically had a more positive body image than women, and they worried more about how their bodies performed than how they looked, according to Ann Kearney-Cooke, a psychologist from the Cincinnati Psychotherapy Institute who specializes in eating-disorder and body-image issues.

But times have changed, she said: Society is much more image-conscious, and male patients from their mid-30s through their 60s say looks are important to both social and professional success.

“Men are feeling that with the recession, economy, losing jobs, that the more youthful they look, the longer they’ll be able to stay in the job market,” she said. She added that they also found the dating scene competitive, telling her, “My father’s generation, you had a good job, you’re a decent guy, and you could get anyone you want. But I have that and women have that, too — and, you know, it’s harder.’ ”

Being and feeling active is important — but so is *looking* fit and active. “I think that’s a new pressure for men,” Kearney-Cooke said. “I think that’s a real shift that’s happened in our culture.”

Before his surgery, Marek was spending at least an hour in the gym, five days a week. On the weekends, he enjoyed being outdoors and going fishing.

“I wanted to look like I felt,” said Marek. “We [baby boomers] take better care of ourselves and we go to the gym more and live longer, and we want to look the part. ”

His plastic surgeon, Stephen Baker, told him that Botox injections would remove some of the superficial wrinkles. A relatively noninvasive “lunchtime lift” would smooth and tighten his facial features for at least a year.

But Marek thought he needed a more aggressive approach. Baker recommended a “male facelift,” tip rhinoplasty (nose surgery) and eyelid surgery.

“He’d look a little rugged but without that tight look,” said Baker, a plastic surgery professor at Georgetown University Hospital.

Baker told Marek the facelift would involve removing excess fat, redistributing some of the deep tissue in Marek’s face and gently tugging on the skin. Tightening loose ligaments around the face and eyes would keep the fat and tissues from sliding back out of place, helping to maintain a youthful, more-rested appearance.

He said the average cost of the six-hour procedure was about \$7,000 and it would involve a recovery time of two to three weeks. The results, he said, could last a decade.

When Marek returned to the gym about a month after the procedure, he said, people noticed a change.

“One of the personal trainers came up to me and asked me if I shaved my mustache or something, or if I changed my hair,” Marek said. “It wasn’t drastic.”

Now, almost a year after the procedure, Marek said, people have stopped telling him how tired he looks.

“If I live another 15 years,” Marek added, “I’ll do it again.”

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