

Inside the Plastic Surgery Boom

When it comes to *cosmetic work*, the pandemic is compelling many women to ask themselves, “If not now, when?”

A couple of weeks into quarantine, Carey, a 42-year-old New Jersey mother of three, decided she wanted to lose the extra 15 pounds she’d been carrying since her youngest child was born in 2017. “Experts were saying that diabetes, which runs in my family, and being overweight were risk factors for contracting COVID-19. I [thought], ‘I need to be healthier. Why not use this time to work on myself?’” Through exercise, she shed the weight in three months, but she still had skin hanging over her C-section scar that bothered her. No matter how many virtual Pilates classes she took, however, “I knew my tummy was never going to look the way I wanted it to.” So when her surgeon’s office reopened, she decided to get a tummy tuck.

Sarah,* 36, a fashion entrepreneur in New York, also opted to get plastic surgery during quarantine. After stabilizing her businesses financially at the beginning of lockdown, she felt she “deserved a reward.” For Sarah, that meant finally getting a blepharoplasty to remove the excess skin from her lids—something she’d been wanting to do for six years.

On the surface, these sound like average plastic surgery stories: A feature or body part has bothered someone for years, so they decide to change it. The twist is that, for a variety of reasons, women are increasingly reaching that go-for-it moment now—in the middle of a global pandemic, when most people had predicted such treatments would fall by the wayside. The major plastic surgery associations have yet to gather final stats for 2020, but Lisa Cassileth, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Los



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Angeles, reports that her surgical colleagues are busier than ever. “There’s this mentality of ‘I’m just going to do it. I’ve waited this long,’” she says. “I’ve never seen this before.”

Partially, it’s a sign of the times. Working from home—with cameras off—has given people unprecedented privacy. As has PPE. “If you wore a mask a year ago in Beverly Hills, people would have assumed you just had a facelift,” Cassileth says. For others, quarantine has given them a backup system. “With my husband not traveling for work, I have a partner who’s home to help manage the children [while I recuperate],” Carey says.

Paradoxically, the plastic surgery rush seems to be fueling a more natural aesthetic. “We’re all at home, so we’re not wearing makeup and we see ourselves au naturel,” Sarah says. “It feels great to walk around without makeup. Why not have a fresh canvas?” Similarly, Dara Liotta, MD, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in New York, says that patients no longer come in with pictures of celebrities as inspiration—they come in with Facetuned pictures of themselves. “They say, ‘I don’t want to look different, just better.’”

Of course, as someone wise once said, there’s no such thing as minor surgery. “I’m a board-certified plastic surgeon, and my attitude is, if you can put off getting surgery, you should,” says Julius Few, MD, an aesthetic plastic surgeon based in Chicago. “Surgery comes with risk and recovery.” Still, quarantine has clearly jump-started a trend of shame-free, self-inspired beauty aspirations, which is always for the best, knife or not. As New York aesthetic and cosmetic plastic surgeon David Shafer, MD, says, “We have all had time to sit and ponder life, and there is a shift in focus to taking care of ourselves now, instead of putting it off until a later date.” —DIDI GLUCK