



To tweak or not to tweak?

Do you know your Botox from your fillers or your microdermabrasion from your cryolipolysis? With non-surgical cosmetic procedures on the rise, Harley Street cosmetic surgeon **Dr Dirk Kremer** reveals what you really need to know.

Once upon a time 'doing your face' meant simply applying some foundation, mascara and lipstick, or having a shave and splashing on some cologne. Now though, thanks to scientific advances and an increase in disposable income, cosmetic procedures or 'tweakments' for baby boomers are on the rise.

New statistics from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons have shown a huge spike in the number of over 55s undergoing cosmetic procedures, with nearly 50,000 more performed in 2018 than in the previous year. According to the British Association

of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, a total of 28,000 procedures took place in 2018 with blepharoplasty, or eyelid surgery, one of the most popular choices.

Indeed, Tupperware parties and nights down the pub have now been replaced with Botox parties - where a beautician comes along to give women, and men, treatments such as Botox while they eat, drink and chat. ➔

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But those customers seeking the cheapest cosmetic options are often being treated by unqualified practitioners with disastrous results. It's an industry that's rife with 'lax regulation' according to British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons President Rajiv Grover, who says: "An operation is not something that can simply be returned to the shop if you have second thoughts."

Dr Grover's warning is echoed by award-winning Harley Street cosmetic surgeon Dr Dirk Kremer. He says he's seen an upsurge of 50-somethings wanting treatment, and has shared his advice for what those looking for a fresher face or enhanced figure.



MAKE SURE THE PRACTITIONER IS QUALIFIED

The top priority when seeking any form of cosmetic surgery or treatment is to go to a qualified practitioner. Check the person doing your dermal fillers is on a register to show they meet set standards in training, skill and insurance.

Those registers include:

- The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS)
- The Joint Council for Cosmetic Practitioners (JCCP)
- Save Face, the register of non-surgical practitioners

Being qualified doesn't just mean they understand how to safely carry out the procedure, it also means that that can achieve a natural look so that you remain within the normal ideals of beauty rather than simply adhering to a social trend.

UNDERSTAND THE TERMS

Unless you've had cosmetic surgery or 'tweakments' yourself, it can be difficult to even understand what people are referring to when they talk about the work they want done.

As a patient, knowing some of the basic terms can help

As a patient, knowing some of the basic terms can help. For example, Botulinum Toxin, most commonly referred to as Botox, is injected into certain areas of the body, usually the forehead, to diminish wrinkles by temporarily paralysing facial muscles.

The term 'dermal fillers', on the other hand, is often used to describe having a natural substance called hyaluronic acid injected into your face and lips to add volume and balance asymmetry.

BE MINDFUL OF THE POTENTIAL DANGERS

Because things like Botox and fillers don't last forever, and usually need to be topped up in about as little as three months, what many people don't realise is that they can still cause permanent damage.

To me, these procedures are 'blind' surgery and come with a significant level of risk. Botox can cause allergic reactions and dermal fillers, if wrongly placed by an under-qualified practitioner, can result in necrosis of the skin or even blindness.

CONSIDER WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING A PROCEDURE FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

I have seen such an increase in people wanting surgery to look like the magazine pictures they see that I've coined the term 'Snapchat dysmorphia' after the social media platform loved by young people.

Of course, I'm not against people having treatment, and there are many positives, both physically and mentally, that can be achieved from altering something about our appearance which is having a negative impact on our lives. However, it's important to try and get to the bottom of why you want it.

Obviously, this varies hugely from one person to the next, but if it's just to look like your filtered photo self then we need to try and remember that this may not be a realistic goal. In some cases it might be worth considering counselling or talking to your doctor to try and get to the root of the problem.

While no one is advocating going under the knife, or the needle, in the name of vanity, it is naïve to think that people won't continue to do so. By being informed about the treatments and practitioners you can protect yourself from permanent damage and help more people to make informed decisions when having tweakments, and retaining and celebrating our natural looks where possible.



Dr Dirk Kremer is specialist cosmetic plastic surgeon who worked across the world before opening his practice in London's Harley Street in 2009.



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