

Nip & Tuck

Plastic surgeons from across Canada and the U.S. gather in Calgary for three-day conference

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They smooth wrinkles, lift sagging skin and boost busts, and now those wizards of timeless aging have descended on Calgary to share their magic.

Starting today, about 110 plastic surgeons from across Canada and the U.S. are in the city for the the Canadian Society for Aesthetic (Cosmetic) Plastic Surgery's annual conference.

In addition to the surgeons, 30 nurses and other medical professionals and 50 exhibitors are here for the three-day conference.

"There's always something new to learn," says Calgary plastic surgeon Dr. Wayne Perron, local organizer of the conference.

The conference allows surgeons to talk about their personal experiences with surgical techniques and procedures being used, compare notes and exchange advice with one ultimate goal in mind: "The basic idea is: can we do it better, more safely, and is this a better procedure for people?," Perron says.

Starting at 8 a.m., guest surgeons from across Canada and the U.S., plus one from Sweden, will perform live surgeries inside two surgical suites at Perron's southwest offices.

Those live surgeries will be telecast to conference rooms inside the Hyatt Regency in downtown Calgary, where surgeons and other conference goers will be able to ask questions in real time about techniques and procedures.

The surgeries to be performed include three breast surgeries



CREDIT: Lorraine Hjalte, Calgary Herald
Dr. Monte Eaves talks with a patient whose thigh lift will be broadcast today to plastic surgeons who are in the city for a three-day conference.

(augmentations and a lift), a face lift, a neck lift and a thigh lift on a patient who has lost more than 50 pounds over the past few years and has excess skin she wants removed. It's a procedure that's being used more frequently as obese people drop dramatic amounts of weight, either through gastric bypass surgery or plain old diet and exercise.

Just how many and what cosmetic and plastic surgery procedures Canadians are getting is a bit of a mystery.

No Canadian association currently collects statistics on our purported and growing love of the nip and tuck, or on those injectables to smooth wrinkles and plump up deep creases.

South of the border, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons tracks the number of procedures performed and demographics annually.

Using the 10 per cent rule for Canada (our population being one-tenth of the U.S.), in 2006 an estimated 1.1 million cosmetic plastic surgeries were performed across the country, representing a seven per cent jump from 2004.

According to the group's 2006 report, the top five surgical cosmetic procedures are breast augmentation, nose reshaping, liposuction, eyelid surgery and the tummy tuck.

The top five minimally invasive cosmetic procedures are Botox injections, chemical peels, laser hair removal, microdermabrasion and hyaluronic acid used as a filler for wrinkles and scars.

In Canada (extrapolating again from American statistics), an estimated 910,000 minimally invasive cosmetic procedures were performed in 2006, representing an eight per cent increase from 2005.

Not surprisingly, women outpace men as the top consumers of cosmetic procedures. Based on the American society's 2006 numbers, it's estimated that 990,000 Canadian women versus 110,000 men had some sort of cosmetic work done. Those numbers represent a nine per cent jump for women and a seven per cent drop for men from 2005, the society found.

Anecdotally, that drop in procedures for men goes against what Calgary plastic surgeon Dr. Kristina Zakhary has found.

While female patients represent 80 per cent of her patient load, she is seeing increasing numbers of men seeking cosmetic work.

"Men are getting into the game because they want to maintain their looks and to be more competitive in the workforce," says Zakhary, who also has a practice in Toronto.

She has also noticed an increase in her injectables business as more patients seek fixes for their wrinkles and ways to plump the lost volume of

tissue that comes with normal aging.

Those fixes last anywhere from a few months to up to five years.

Zakhary says these minimally invasive procedures are becoming "more and more popular because there's less downtime that's necessary and also fewer risks involved" compared to surgical procedures.

"But, of course, surgery is timeless," Zakhary says.

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