

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF COSMETIC SURGERY FACT SHEET

What is the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery?

The American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery is a professional medical society whose members are dedicated to patient safety and physician education in cosmetic surgery. Founded in 1985, there are over 2,200 members of the AACS. Practice areas for AACS members include Dermatology, Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery, Otolaryngology, General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Plastic/Reconstructive Surgery and OB/GYN. AACS is the organization that represents cosmetic surgeons in the American Medical Association. The Academy, in conjunction with the Cosmetic Surgery Foundation, sponsors the Annual Scientific Meeting as well as many live-surgery workshops.

What is cosmetic surgery?

Cosmetic surgery is a subspecialty of medicine and surgery that uniquely restricts itself to the enhancement of appearance through surgical and medical techniques. It is specifically concerned with maintaining normal appearance, restoring it, or enhancing it. Cosmetic surgery is a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive approach directed to all areas of the head, neck and body.

The educational profile of this specialty is unique in that it begins with a fully trained and certified surgeon. Through continued post-residency education training, and experience, cosmetic surgery is taught and learned across traditional disciplinary boundaries. The subspecialty fully incorporates the participation and knowledge from all contributing disciplines to attain a high level of skill and understanding. Contributing disciplines include dermatologic surgery, facial plastic surgery, general surgery, plastic surgery, otolaryngology, oculoplastic surgery, oral-maxillofacial surgery and others.

What is plastic surgery?

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, plastic surgery is a surgical specialty dedicated to reconstruction of facial and body defects due to birth disorders, trauma, burns, and disease.

What is the difference between plastic and cosmetic surgery?

Cosmetic surgery is entirely elective and meant to enhance one's appearance. Plastic surgery is medically indicated and reconstructive in nature.

What is the difference between how a cosmetic surgeon is trained versus a plastic surgeon?

A cosmetic surgeon is a doctor who has completed their specialty in a particular area such as dermatology, general surgery, otolaryngology or obstetrics and has gone on to receive continuing medical education in the emerging specialty of cosmetic surgery.

A plastic surgeon is a doctor who has completed his residency in plastic surgery, specializing in such topics as facial and body defects, burns, birth disorders and disease. Plastic surgeons do not learn about cosmetic procedures in their residency programs.

What is the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery? What are the requirements for Board Certification in cosmetic surgery?

The American Board of Cosmetic Surgery is the only certifying board exam devoted to examining a surgeon's skill in cosmetic surgery of the face and body. It is an independent subspecialty board that examines and certifies physicians in general, facial and dermatological cosmetic surgery.

Why should one see a board-certified cosmetic surgeon versus a board-certified plastic surgeon?

We encourage patients to seek medical professionals that specialize in a specific field. Doctors who are board-certified in cosmetic surgery have passed the necessary examinations to prove their proficiency in cosmetic surgery.