

The Beauty Business: Plastic surgery gains in popularity among image-conscious

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Every woman has her secrets for staying beautiful and she guards them jealously. Especially if her new young look owes everything to the plastic surgeon.

Despite the immense social and economic difficulties of recent years, Armenian women have always tried to look their best. Many beauty salons have sprung up to serve smartly dressed middle class women concerned to keep their hair nice and nails polished.

Now plastic surgery is in vogue. Armenians used to travel to Moscow for such operations but now prefer to stay at home and be treated by local doctors.

Specialists are not grouped in a single plastic surgery center in Armenia but work instead in departments within six medical institutes in Yerevan.

Procedures include many branches of aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, such as nose, ears, and lips reshaping, chemical peels, facelifts, breast enlargement and reduction, liposuction, and even increases in height. This last option, involving the stretching of bones, is rarely performed because it is so physically painful.

Both patients and physicians say prices for operations in Armenia are very reasonable..

"There were more than 90 operations made in our center in the past two years on nose reshaping," says Ara Hairapetian, head of the maxillo-facial surgery division of Erebuni Medical Center.

Although Hairapetian admits that plastic surgery is regarded as an exclusive medical service, patients are certainly not all wealthy.

"If a woman wants to be beautiful and she needs money for that she will save on other things in order to have it," he says.

He considers a good result to be not simply reshaping the nose to make it more beautiful, but also making the surgery itself invisible in the eyes of other people.

"First of all one must take into account facial proportions, some women look attractive as a result of their big nose or large lips," says Hairapetian. That is why, he says, he persuades some patients not to go ahead with surgery.

Hairapetian's portfolio contains before-and-after portraits of people who have undergone operations. The contrast can be dramatic and the procedure is not gender biased.





Nineteen-year-old Gevorg Grigorian, for example, underwent six hours of plastic surgery to reshape his nose, ears, and jaw. His photos (pictured) make it hard to believe they are the same person.

Armenian women are no exceptions to the universal terror of gaining weight or discovering new wrinkles. The punishing effect of childbirth on a woman's body can also leave them feeling unloved and ugly.

"Despite the difficulties Armenia faces today, and Armenian women especially, their desire to look good doesn't decrease but on the contrary increases. This is a very optimistic fact," Torosian says.

Photos by Mkhitar Khachatrian & Courtesy of Gevorg Grigorian

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