



Considering COSMETIC SURGERY?

Check out a Durham expert's advice, then learn more about all of our city's cosmetic procedure specialists By Noor Shehzad

A year after the birth of my second child, I began to seriously consider cosmetic surgery to get my stomach back in shape. (Both of my kids weighed more than 10 pounds when they were born!)

I did my homework, speaking with friends who'd undergone surgery, weighing the health risks and considering the cost of an abdominoplasty, commonly known as a tummy tuck, which can average between \$5,000 and \$9,000.

During a consultation, the doctor raised several other important questions I needed to ask myself that could affect the outcome of the surgery and my satisfaction.

A major question was whether I was done having kids, as the muscle walls tightened with surgery could reopen during pregnancy. Meanwhile, he advised I get down to my ideal weight, a suggestion echoed in the list below by Dr. Edward Ray of Southpoint Plastic Surgery. Certified by the American Board of Surgery, Dr. Ray urges patients to tell "your doctor if you are actively dieting and if your weight is fluctuating. This may affect the timing of surgery in order to achieve the best results."

My son is now 2, and my body has regained much of its normal shape through diet and exercise. I intend to reschedule my surgery with one of the practices listed on the following pages. Before you make your appointment, consider some of the tips suggested by Dr. Ray:

Be informed about your options. Check out The American Society of Plastic Surgeons site at www.plasticsurgery.org.

Choose your surgeon wisely. Ask about their training, experience and board certification.

Find out where the surgeon performs procedures - in their office or in a surgical facility, and what type of anesthesia is offered.

Be sure to tell your surgeon about your health history (including smoking) and any medications that you take.

If you expect to have significant "down time," make sure you have friends or family who will be able to stay with you for a few days. DM 