



No plastic? FANTASTIC!

Ever wondered where the term 'Plastic Surgery' came from? Perhaps it relates to the way we pay? 'Put it on the plastic!' A fair guess, but in actual fact, there's nothing plastic about plastic surgery!

Although it's a common misconception that plastic surgery is somehow related to the use of plastic or synthetic materials, the word 'plastic' actually stems from the Greek word 'plastiko', meaning to mold or shape.

History shows us that the desire to improve our appearance is as old as time itself. Findings have shown that as far back as 3,300BC ancient societies in India used skin grafts to repair noses and ears lost in battle. However, the first published use of the term is known to have been by a German surgeon, Dr Carl von Graefe (1787-1840). Von Graefe performed various ground-breaking surgeries including the first known satisfactory procedure to correct the nose – a rhinoplasty.

But it was in aftermath of the Second World War that plastic surgery gained serious ground in the field of cosmetic improvements. British soldier Walter Yeo is often noted as the 'first person to receive plastic surgery.' Yeo suffered serious burns to his face during the war, losing his upper and lower eyelids. He was treated by Sir Harold Gillies who was regarded as the 'father of plastic surgery.' Sir Gillies was the first person to use the skin-graft

technique and provided Yeo with new eyelids and a mask of skin across his face and eyes.

Today, the term 'plastic surgeon' is a closely defined and legally protected title. "All plastic surgeons are listed with the New Zealand Medical Council as a vocationally registered specialist in plastic surgery," explains Cosmetic and Reconstructive Surgeon Tristan de Chalain.

Thanks to the early pioneers of plastic surgery, the techniques and technology available today mean that life-changing surgery is safe, effective, and often undetectable. And it's something that more and more people are choosing to have. Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon Murray Beagley explains, "New Zealand is experiencing an upsurge in the demand for Cosmetic Surgery. There is a much greater awareness and readiness to accept such surgery due to ever increasing media exposure."

Like other forms of medical advancement, plastic surgery has come a long way since von Graefe's day. And thanks to surgeons such as those featured in Beautiful You Magazine, we can look forward to a future where cosmetic reconstruction and enhancement is safe, affordable and often life-changing for those who need it. 

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