



Apoorva Salkade

Blubber out Doctors preparing a patient before a fat grafting operation at the Cosmetic Surgery Institute in Mumbai

society: cosmetic surgery

The Desi Barbies

The operating table as liberator, money can now buy beauty [Amba Batra Bakshi](#)

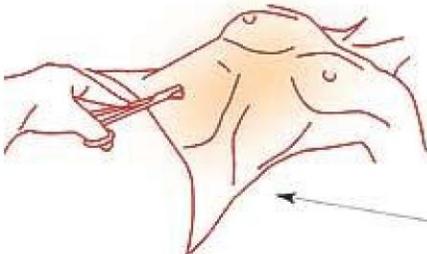
Marketing intern Vidya always wanted dimples, especially as she was the only one in her family not to be naturally blessed with them. So when she read about “denting”, which is getting dimples surgically added to your face, she just knew she had to take the plunge. The doctors did warn Vidya that surgically added dimples wouldn’t exactly look like the real thing, even told her that the results were irreversible. But she wasn’t fazed. And why think twice, she reasoned, about something that would just take 30 minutes and cost a mere Rs 15,000.

Vidya, who works with a leading MNC in Mumbai, is part of a young demographic today with cash in their wallets who are opting for surgical enhancements—not because they need it but because they want it. Like denting, another unusual request finding its way to plastic surgeons’ clinics is for navel or belly button correction, which entails turning a protruding belly button (an “outie”) into a prettier, inward-facing one. Dr Mohan Thomas, chief surgeon at The Cosmetic Surgery Institute in Mumbai, says with fashion dictating that more people than ever before are looking to bare their midriff and a lot more, the demand is rising. And this is just the tip of the scalpel, so to speak—there’s toe-shortening for prettier feet, cleft removal for chins, nipple corrections, nose „uplifting“, lengthening lips to

fix a “down-turning” mouth and collagen injections for the feet to make wearing heels less painful.

Cut To The Chase

From face to toe, there’s a corrective procedure to prettify every body part

<p>Endoscopic facelifts Less invasive than regular facelifts. Cost Rs 1.5 lakh</p> 	<p>Fat bank storage Most clinics extract your fat and store it for free (to be used as a filler later, a new alternative to Botox) whereas others charge a minimal fee of Rs 500-1,000</p>	<p>Dimpleplasty or denting, to create dimples Takes 30 minutes, costs Rs 15,000</p> 	<p>Navel Correction Usually done as part of a tummy tuck-in, but also on its own for Rs 20,000-50,000</p> 
	<p>Mummy Makeover Breast and abdomen recontouring after child-birth, removal of stretch marks and surgery to increase vaginal elasticity. Cost: Rs 1.5-2.5 lakh</p>	<p>Toe correction An orthopaedic procedure, cost varies depending on work involved</p> 	<p>Vagina makeover Takes 40 minutes to tighten the vagina, for Rs 35,000-Rs 55,000; patients can pay more to have hair permanently removed from the vagina, which requires further sittings</p>

Dr Sunil Choudhary, aesthetic and reconstructive surgeon at Max Healthcare in Delhi, says the biggest trend these days is for endoscopic facelifts and structural fat grafting, which entails using your own fat to „recontour“ your body. He explains that an endoscopic facelift is less invasive than a surgical one and leaves fewer scars. Results too, he maintains, are often better for the scarless procedure (cost between Rs 1-1.5 lakh). The process entails pulling the facial skin through an incision on the forehead and fixing the skin to the bone structure of the face. “Botox still sells but this is for those looking for the next step,” says Dr Choudhary.



"Botox still sells but endoscopic facelifts is for those looking for the next step," says Dr Choudhary.

In Mumbai, Dr Thomas says, this procedure is particularly popular during the wedding season, with sometimes many members from a single family asking for it in the run-up to the event! "A lot of these trends are driven by Bollywood here," says the doctor, pointing out that many of our stars have gone in for the procedure. "Fat banking" too has grown in popularity. Doctors say they are able to store the fat for up to two years, and often do it free of charge, since patients usually plan to come back for procedures using the same fat. This fat can be injected back in small amounts into the face for a plumper and more youthful look or to remove fine lines and wrinkles. Dr Thomas says he does about eight such procedures a month, up from just one or two five years ago.

The big advantage of structural fat grafting, say doctors, is that it uses the body's own stem cells to regenerate areas of the body that require rejuvenation. Once the fat is drawn out of the body and processed, the stem cells get activated, and get to work once the fat is injected back into the desired area. Women who have had liposuction done from their midribs, say doctors, often opt to have the fat stored these days. But fat can be removed from other areas too, such as the buttocks and thighs for women, and from the stomach for men.

Experts warn, however, that patients should do their homework and not get too carried away by the possibilities for „rejuvenation“ through fat storage. They say the service is being misused to enhance breasts, which is a very tricky area, rife with danger. As a leading cosmetologist from Calcutta (who did not want to be named) put it, "Using stored fat for enhancing breasts is a controversial topic around the world. If not done correctly, this can have serious side-effects, but doctors across Indian metros are unfortunately encouraging this. With breast cancer on the rise, we need to be very careful about putting stem cells into women's breasts."

Among the other new offerings in the cosmetic surgery industry is what Dr Thomas calls the "mummy makeover". This is a package of post-childbirth improvements for new mothers, including breast corrections, abdominal re-contouring, the removal of stretch marks and procedures to increase vaginal elasticity. Says Pratima Singh (name changed on request) from Jaipur, "I had read about this service and after my third child, decided to go in for it as I felt my body had changed a lot. It was successful and I have no regrets." The package cost her Rs 2.5 lakh and was done at a Delhi hospital.

With or without the "mummy makeover", a makeover for the vagina (see box) is also growing in popularity. Doctors are struck by the fact that women are becoming less and less shy about approaching clinics for such procedures. As one of them blithely puts it, "This is all coffee table talk now."

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