

Westport surgeon explains nips and tucks of plastic surgery

BY STEPHANIE BASS

Plastic surgery used "to be just for the rich, the famous and the vain.

But not according to Westport plastic surgeon Dr. Neil A. Gordon who, in a well-attended seminar last week titled "Everything You Wanted to Know About Plastic Surgery," showed that new techniques and the careful selection of a surgeon can make facial surgery easy for anyone.

To a rapt audience of mostly women at The Women's Health and Wellness Center in Stamford, Gordon discussed how, "Armed with sufficient information, [plastic surgery] should be logically approached and you should be able to come to your own conclusions."

The first question to Gordon from a seminar attendee was: "When is the time for surgery?" "When your outside doesn't match how you feel on the inside," was his reply.

Gordon went on to explain the issues involved in making a plastic surgery decision: aesthetics, what to know about your surgeon, what aging is and why surface treatments and surgery are sometimes both needed for optimum results.

"Results are the most important consideration in choosing a surgeon," Gordon said. "You want to see 'before' and 'after' pictures of their other clients. There is no other way to determine if you are

both in agreement on the aesthetics — what we think of as attractive and pleasing to the eye — of a procedure."

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— DR. NEIL A. GORDON, PLASTIC SURGEON

In other words, even if your four best friends loved their procedures and their doctor looks and acts like the attentive Dr. Doug Ross (played on television by George Clooney), you must judge him on his aesthetic sense.

"That's what the new plastic surgery is about," Gordon said. "Looking better and looking natural, not knocking off a specific number of years. The greatest compliment to get is 'You look great', not 'You just had your eyes done!'"

Gordon believes that charts that show the perfect distance between features or the exact degree of an angle of a chin or eyebrow take an old approach to plastic surgery and don't always offer the best results.

The Westporter explained that doctors with many different surgical backgrounds perform facial plastic surgery. "Never be embarrassed to ask a surgeon about their training or experience," Gordon told his audience.

"After medical school, a general plastic surgeon completes a residency and fellowship in general surgery, which basically means the whole body," said Gordon, who is a facial plastic surgeon. "Facial plastic surgeons complete a residency in



Photo by David Vakondakis

Sign of the times

While the south side parking lot at the Saugatuck Railroad Station commonly floods at high tide, the rains Monday and Tuesday surely made matters worse. At least commuters were smart enough not to park in low-lying areas Tuesday morning.

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head and neck surgery, generally for five years, and a fellowship in facial plastic surgery."

Oculoplastic surgeons concentrate on the eyes; dermatologists complete a residency and fellowship in dermatology, he continued. It is also important to note the amount of experience a surgeon may have in a specific procedure, according to Gordon. A surgeon who may have an extensive background in rhinoplasty (nose surgery) and achieves excellent results, may have little experience in liposuction (fat removal).

Patients must also be comfortable with their surgeon, feel free to ask questions, believe the surgeon understands their needs, and understand everything that will occur in a procedure, including possible side effects and length of recovery. Gordon's advice is to trust your instincts when you choose a surgeon.

Everyone is aging, and the fight to keep a youthful face is against gravity and surface changes. But combating surface changes — lines, light wrinkles, discoloration and rough skin texture — is easier, less intrusive and less costly than combating gravity, said Gordon.

Weapons against surface changes range from inexpensive pharmacy treatments to chemical peels, dermabrasions, and \$2,000 laser procedures that resurface facial skin.

"Gravity cannot be reversed with surface treatments, only by surgery," Gordon said. "It is the sagging under the skin. Often

what gravity does is to mimic the negative emotions we have, causing us to not only look older, but also unhappy. Gravity pulls our eyebrows down, making us look angry.

"Dark circles and fat deposits under the eyes make us look tired. These are not the 'tiny lines' we get. It's the layer beneath the skin that needs to be cut and trimmed and tightened to get back the look that gravity has taken away."

New methods developed in the last 10 years and only recently used by a limited number of surgeons, rely on changing the underlying structure of the face, he explained. Older methods pulled the skin, asking it to hold up the sagging underlayers, resulting in a taut look, and jarring and unequal planes on the face; anything but a natural look.

The newest face lift is called a deep plane lift, used to restore the high cheekbones, strong jawline and chin, Gordon said.

"What plastic surgery will do is set the clock back. But if a procedure subtracts 8 years from your face, in 10 years you will look 2 years older." Will a patient need surgery again? "Only if you want it," Gordon stated.

Gordon now practices in Westport and Greenwich, but he will soon be affiliated with The Women's Health and Wellness Center. The Stamford women's medical practice headed by Dr. Carol Lynne Upright, is expanding its services.

"When a woman looks good, she feels good," Upright said.