

Nip, tuck, click: Demand for U.S. plastic surgery rises in selfie era

Thanks in large part to the smartphone, as well as social media, selfies have skyrocketed in popularity. And now, people are getting more and more plastic surgery to look their best for the camera.

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People are going under the knife before going in front of the camera.

Dental hygienist Jennifer Reynolds was always self-conscious about her looks, never took selfies and felt uncomfortable being tagged in photographs posted on social media.

The 34-year-old from Costa Rica who lives in New York opted for plastic surgery on her nose and now feels ready for prime time on social media.

"I definitely feel more comfortable right now with my looks," Reynolds explained. "If I need to take a selfie, without a doubt, I would have no problem."

Reynolds is one of a growing number of people who have turned to plastic surgeons to enhance their image. Others are hiring specialized make-up artists in what may be an emerging selfie economy.

Selfies, or self portraits, rose in popularity along with smartphones and social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Instagram as a mostly young adult crowd posted images of themselves. Now everyone from Hollywood stars to prime ministers takes selfies.

Comedian Ellen DeGeneres posted a selfie with Hollywood A-listers at the Academy Awards on Twitter that became the most retweeted of all time. When Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt's snapped a selfie with President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron at Nelson Mandela's memorial service it caused a media sensation.

For mere mortals, going under the scalpel to create a better selfie may not seem so extreme.

Plastic surgeons in United States have seen a surge in demand for procedures ranging from eye-lid lifts to rhinoplasty, popularly known as a nose job, from patients seeking to improve their image in selfies and on social media.

A poll by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS) of 2,700 of its members showed that one in three had seen an increase in requests for procedures due to patients being more aware of their image in social media. They noted a 10 percent rise in rhinoplasty in 2013 over 2012, a 7 percent jump in hair transplants and 6 percent increase in eyelid surgery.

"There has been a 25 percent increase over the past year and a half to two years. That is very significant," Dr. Sam Rizk, a plastic surgeon, said about his Manhattan practice.



Ellen DeGeneres' epic selfie at the 2014 Oscars was the most retweeted image of all time.

"They come in with their iPhones and show me pictures," Rizk, 47, added. "Selfies are just getting to be so crazy.

BOOMING BUSINESS IN SELFIE ECONOMY

Rizk, who specializes in rhinoplasty, said not everyone who requests surgery needs it because a selfie produces a distorted image that does not represent how a person really looks.

"We all will have something wrong with us on a selfie image," he explained. "I refuse a significant proportion of patients with selfies because I believe it is not a real image of what they actually look like in person."

Some patients get upset when Rizk tells them surgery is not necessary, and he knows they will simply go to another surgeon.

"Too many selfies indicate a self obsession and a certain level of insecurity that most teenagers have. It just makes it worse," he said. "Now they can see themselves in 100 images a day on Facebook and Instagram."

New York make-up artist Ramy Gafni, who has worked with clients on selfies and online dating profile photos, suggests using clean makeup, well-defined eyebrows and a bit color on the lips to produce the best selfies.

"You want to enhance your features, perfect your features but not necessarily change your features into something they are not," he said.

Dan Ackerman, senior editor with CNET which tests and reviews products, said the Internet is full of tips and advice on selfies.

"There are apps that apply filters to your face that smooth out wrinkles ... or put artificial makeup.... There is a sub economy of tools and advice that have built up around this," he added.