

# Your teenager wants a nose job!

## Now what?

*A guide to teen plastic surgery.*



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# YOUR TEENAGER WANTS A NOSE JOB!

Of course, many thoughts enter into the mind of parents when a youngster asks for cosmetic surgery. Some of the common concerns I hear are:

- “I thought I gave my teenager a better sense of who they are and to be happy with themselves no matter what.”
- “Who is my daughter doing this for?”
- “If I let them do this, isn’t this just the beginning of a life-long obsession with plastic surgery?”
- “Is this a sign that my child is depressed or has a psychological issue?”
- “Why does my son care about his nose? I thought boys are not supposed to be so concerned with their appearance”
- “How are we going to afford this?”



# AS A FATHER OF THREE DAUGHTERS,

I completely understand and empathize with a parent's desire to do what's best for their child. Adolescence and high school are emotionally labile times for many teenagers. During this period, teens are formulating the social skills that will guide them throughout the rest of their lives. Many teenagers struggle to find where they belong amongst their friends, entering into and out of multiple cliques as they try to find where they fit.

In parallel, they are also developing their own sense of self and getting comfortable with how they feel in their own skin as their self-esteem crystallizes. Unfortunately, some kids are bullied, teased and left out. At times, it can be a maddening roller coaster for parents. Many kids look to their peers and respected adults searching for ways to help them through this requisite maturing process. Many young women explore fashion, makeup, and new hairstyles as a means to express themselves. Young men, many for the first time, become aware of their appearance in clothing, gym shoes, and their skin as acne surfaces and they learn to shave.

Additionally, as our kids' access to multimedia has exploded, it seems kids are influenced and exposed to more mixed messages than ever before. Just about every TV station has a program celebrating plastic surgery as the answer to gaining courage, finding a mate, or appearing "just right" on their wedding day. Many of our most infamous reality stars can be seen bantering about the latest cosmetic surgical treatment as if it were the hottest new clothing fashion in town. It is not surprising to hear that your son or daughter, who is likely overexposed to plastic surgery, is now requesting a rhinoplasty.



# WHY IS IT SO POPULAR?

Cosmetic medicine has become incredibly popular in American society. As medicine continues to advance and procedures become increasingly less invasive, cosmetic medical procedures have grown over 3800 percent over the last decade. Additionally, previous stigmas of cosmetic medical procedures being for the wealthy and vain are now debunked. As procedures have become increasingly affordable and less invasive, cosmetic medicine is much more accepted and valued in our society. Many physicians, including myself, have spearheaded philosophical changes in cosmetic medicine to value the psychosocial benefits of cosmetic medicine more so than the physical changes. Research that we have conducted here in Chicago has proven that cosmetic procedures can lead to greater self-esteem, improved quality of life and the ability to project a more favorable first impression.<sup>2-5</sup> Although these studies have all been done in adults, anecdotally, we see similar patterns of benefits in appropriately mature teenagers.

So, it is not surprising your teenager has expressed interest in a rhinoplasty. Once you get over the initial shock of their request, what's the next step?



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# CONTEMPLATING THE PROCEDURE

Many emotions may come into play when your child requests a rhinoplasty. Maybe you had your nose reshaped as a youngster and it was a wonderful life-changing experience. Maybe you had a parent that made you do it and cosmetic surgery brings out negative emotions. Maybe you are a proponent of never altering yourself and you are surprised your teenager could have such an outlandish request. Regardless, after you allow your emotions to settle and time to digest their request, now is the time to think critically about this within a larger perspective. Your child's request may present a fantastic opportunity to talk to your teenager about the importance of self, physical appearance and being comfortable with who they are. Ultimately, these discussions will lead you to determine if rhinoplasty is the right choice, and if it is the right time for your teenager to undergo the procedure.

Allowing your son or daughter to move forward with a rhinoplasty is not a knee-jerk response, and this decision should not be taken lightly. It should be well thought out.

For most teenagers, looking in a mirror, brushing their hair and gaining interest in their clothes is normal. They are expressing their individuality and starting to recognize the importance of their physicality and its impact in society - both within their own self as well as to the opposite gender. To teenagers, appearance has a dramatic effect on how they feel about themselves. If someone has a physical feature that is significantly outside the ordinary, then it may become a focus for isolation. Nothing can be worse for your child than to be teased because of large ears, nose or, heaven forbid, some sort of birth defect. If your child is the one being outcast, it can be emotionally painful for you as well. Once you are aware of the situation, persistent and genuine efforts at communication and listening to your child are ideal. Unfortunately, too often, kids don't tell their parents about the teasing. Parents, of course, are often oblivious to the difference in their kid's appearance. It is human nature to believe our kids are beautiful and nearly perfect. Additionally, some kids are ashamed or embarrassed to tell their parents that they are being teased for a physical reason because they may internalize this as a rejection of their parents.

*“Too often, kids don't tell their parents about the teasing.”*

# CAN ADOLESCENT TEASING LEAD TO

Well, yes, there are studies<sup>6-8</sup> that kids who are subjected to significant ridicule as children grow up with psychological scars that affect them for life. There are two facial features that, if far out of the normal variant in size or shape, can have long lasting psychological impact. Every week, I see an adult who comes in for a nasal reshaping or ear pinning regardless of their age, social status or other physical features who request one of these two procedures particularly because they were teased about it as a child and it stuck with them despite the many years and success they have had since. One story in particular I can remember....

A 67-year-old gentle, warm, lovely woman came in for a consultation. She had deep forehead wrinkles, heavy redundant upper eyelids, her lower eyelids were puffy and she looked like she hadn't slept in days. Her jowls were long, heavy and falling into her neck. She appeared tired and weathered. I asked her how I could help her and I was certain she would be interested in a facelift, eyelid rejuvenating procedure, or perhaps a Botox /Filler treatment, but it was much to my surprised when she requested a rhinoplasty. I was taken aback. Her nose was slightly enlarged in proportion to the rest of her facial features but it wasn't nearly as deleterious to her cosmetic appearance as other signs of aging she exhibited. So, I was befuddled. "Why your nose?" I asked. She then told me a story that I couldn't forget.

# LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL DETRIMENTS?

As a youngster, she grew up in a community where she felt she was an outsider. She was teased about her ethnicity and her nose, in particular, generated a lot of attention. She went on to get married at the age of 16, had four kids and lived a happy life. However, she always wanted to have her nose fixed, but it was not to be heard of by her husband. Recently, she was widowed and now that her husband had passed on. She felt liberated to undergo a procedure to cure an ail that has bothered her for 50 years! I was amazed that the wrinkles and heavy jowls did not bother her at all, and rather it was the deep-seated emotional scars from years of teasing her about her big nose from her adolescent days that she wanted to treat. So I did the rhinoplasty and she was very satisfied.

# YOU MIGHT BE THINKING...

“But shouldn’t my kid learn to deal with social pressures and the occasional negative discourse. I mean throughout their life critics will be abundant?”

Well, yes, that is true and certainly teaching your teenager to absorb petty insults from others and to overcome it is a crucial and necessary adaptive social skill. This needs to be part of your discussion. If your teenager is under the impression that a rhinoplasty is the ultimate solution to solving all their self-image concerns and social problems, then they may not be requesting the procedure for the right reasons. Understanding your son/daughter’s motivations for undergoing the rhinoplasty is critical to your decision making process. If they are just trying to appease someone else, then this is not the time to undergo a surgical procedure and discussing with your child that plastic surgery is not the answer to guaranteeing them popularity or greater peer acceptance is necessary.

Too frequently, and much more concerning, is a teenager requesting rhinoplasty to appease a parent. I will refuse to do a rhinoplasty on a reluctant teenager for the sake of an overaggressive mother or father pushing their child into a procedure. The teenager has to want to do it for him or herself. There is no surefire way in which to psychologically handicap your child’s self-esteem than to force them to undergo an image altering cosmetic procedure in which they are not interested. The message a child receives is that they are not pretty or handsome enough and this is coming from the person they love, trust and respect the most. Not wanting to disappoint, they will go through with it. Kids can lose a sense of self and foster a dependence on their parental approval that will be hard to reverse.

*“The teenager has to want to do it for him or herself.”*



# THE POSITIVE SIDE OF RHINOPLASTY

For the teenager who elects to undergo rhinoplasty with the right motivations and expectations, there can be a dramatic improvement in their self-confidence, often fueling a lasting enhancement of their self-esteem. I have seen so many teenagers who walk into my office for a consultation harboring shaggy hair, a disheveled appearance and hunched over posture, only to strut back into my office after having their noses refined with their chin up, hair styled back and sense of well-being that can only be described as, wow!

Earlier this year, I treated a young man who came in with his single mother requesting nasal reshaping. He was shy and not very forthcoming about his reasons for undergoing a rhinoplasty. His mom was reluctant, but loved and supported him unconditionally, and despite the financial difficulties of affording his procedure, she agreed to make it a reality. She wrote us an email a couple weeks after his surgery that I think illustrates a typical outcome from my patients.

“He looks wonderful, and I can see his self-confidence growing every day. This was the best decision we could have made. I am a single mother and teacher, so financially, I walked out of our first visit telling “John” there was no way we could do it right now. I am so glad I found a way because when “John” looked at himself in the mirror the day the splint was taken off, there was no price that could be put on the expression on his face...it was truly priceless. Dr. Dayan and everyone in your office have been wonderful. This procedure has already changed “John’s” life for the better and in turn, has changed mine too. Thank you so very much from the bottom of our hearts.”



If your son or daughter decides they want to undergo the procedure, then it is best to discuss and question their true motivations? Do they realize this will make a subtle image enhancing improvement in their life, but likely will not be the answer to all their prayers? It has to be done for themselves and not be the means to catching the eye of the star quarterback, impressing their best friend or to gain the approval of a parent. But when rhinoplasty is done for the right reasons, there is clear evidence for both adults and teenagers that it can result in an improved quality of life and self-esteem. This can be one of the greatest gifts a parent can give to their child. The key though is to know you are doing it for the right reasons.

If you think you are ready for the next step then read on.

# THE CONSULTATION

When I meet with you and your teenage daughter/son, the first thing I do is make sure he/she is physically ready for the procedure. I will want your teenager to be at approximately 90% of their final height and physically developed with mature facial features. Generally, females are at least two years after their first menstrual period and teenage boys have started to shave. The nose has to be at a point at which it appears well developed. If we determine that your teenager is physically qualified for the procedure, then we next will discuss their maturity level.

I also look at if the teenager is mature enough to take care of themselves and their nose following the procedure. I will ask questions to help determine your teenager's level of readiness. Do they have the psychological depth and skill to handle an image altering procedure? If they qualify, then we will go into depth about their motivations for the procedure. I will ask detailed questions to understand their thoughts and reasoning for the procedure. How long have they been considering it? Why are they considering it? How do they envision it changing their life? How will it change if at all the way in which their friend and family think of them?

If they provide acceptable answers, then I will show computer simulated photos of your teenager with multiple different new noses and ask them to determine which one they think is best for them. This is where parents frequently can't help but to jump in and tell the teenager that one is best. I urge you to let them decide first. They will ask you for advice, I promise you, but let them first make a choice then offer your thoughts and we can all discuss together which nose best fits your teenager.

Once we all decide rhinoplasty is right for your teenager, my patient coordinator, Katie, will meet with you to discuss the financing and the scheduling logistics of the procedure. If insurance is part of the equation, she can discuss in detail with you the mechanism for submitting claims.

Details about what to expect on the day of the procedure will be provided by Jaklyn, our Surgical Physician Assistant. She will go further into detail about pre-treatment and post-treatment instructions and how to optimize the outcome. Our team of coordinators will make sure to answer every question that arises. And of course, I am always available to discuss further any concerns you may have. It is our mission to make certain you are entirely comfortable with your decision and be your partner throughout the whole process until completely satisfied with the outcome.



# FAQ

## **What is the most appropriate age for a rhinoplasty?**

The youngest age that we perform rhinoplasty is more based on an individual's maturity level both physically and emotionally. Generally speaking, for females the age of 16 is the youngest on which we tend to operate. I have however, performed rhinoplasty on a few 15-year-old females who were physically mature with noses that were out of proportionally deformed and resulted in taunting from peers. I thought it maybe leading to psychologically scarring that would be best treated by correcting the nasal deformity. Rarely teenage boys are ready for surgery before the age of 17.

## **How much school do they have to miss?**

Generally, one week off of school is adequate time to recover from rhinoplasty. School breaks over winter, summer and spring are the most common times for teenagers to undergo a rhinoplasty. Occasionally, the five days of Thanksgiving break are enough time to recover. A very common time for a teenager to undergo rhinoplasty is the summer before college.

*“A very common time for a teenager to undergo rhinoplasty is the summer before college.”*



## **When can they resume gym class, physical activity and sports?**

Most teenagers abstain for two weeks from gym class and take six weeks before returning to competitive sports. If a youngster is on the football, basketball or hockey team or in a sport in which their nose may be at risk for being traumatized, it might be best to postpone their surgery until they are done competing.

## **Is rhinoplasty safe?**

Rhinoplasty, when done at an accredited surgical center with a dedicated team tending to your teenager including an anesthesiologist, an experienced nursing staff and plastic surgeon who is an expert in rhinoplasty, is a safe and routine practice. Over 138,000 rhinoplastys are performed each year in the U.S. and it is very rare, if ever, that a serious event is recorded. If your teenager has any unusual medical conditions that concern you, please be certain to bring this up at the consultation.

## **What kind of anesthesia will be necessary?**

Most commonly, general anesthesia is used for your teenager. This is the safest way in which to do your teenagers surgery and safety is always our number one concern.

## **What if my daughter/son wants a nose that I think doesn't look right on them?**

At the consultation, I can morph your teenager's photo to show you different options of noses using the latest in computer imaging software. This serves as a communication device. It allows me to understand what your teenager desires better and I can let them know if it is physically achievable. It is more than likely that as soon as your teenager views their photo with a new nose, they will immediately be impressed with what they can look like. Let your child decide what they like best, and then we can all discuss it together. I will explain in detail the pros and cons from both an aesthetic and functional sense to the nose they have chosen. If they go with one you don't like, I generally recommend allowing your teenager to pick what they like best. It is their nose and they have to live with it, but if you are certain they are making a mistake then this can be a point for discussion for you and your teenager. We will send home the photos with you and we can discuss them at a later date together.

## **Do insurance companies provide benefits that cover a portion of the expense?**

Often times, if your teenager has nasal obstruction, insurance will cover a portion of the procedure dedicated to improving breathing. Frequently, the insurance companies will request medical records documenting a medical history of nasal obstruction. Katie may ask you about this. Regardless, if they provide benefits for the functional portion of the procedure, they will not provide benefits for the cosmetic portion. This is an out of pocket expense that will be billed separately. At your consultation appointment, Katie will go into detail about what financial arrangements you can expect. Financing options are available for those who qualify and Katie will go into detail about this with you as well.

## **What will their friends think?**

Most of your teenager's friends will be excessively occupied with themselves to notice a difference in your teenager. Most frequently, my patients report back to me the comments they commonly hear include, "You look great what did you do?" "Were you on vacation?" "Something looks different about you, but just not sure what it is," or "Did you cut your hair?"

## **Am I making a mistake that will plunge them into a life-long pattern of always trying to do surgery?**

If you are permitting your teenager to do the procedure for the right reasons, then you can be comfortable that you are not leading them down a long road of recurrent cosmetic procedures. Rhinoplasty is often the only cosmetic procedure that many people do. Because the nose occupies the middle of the face and symmetry is arguably the most important character trait defining physical beauty, the nose is often the only facial feature that ever causes concern.



## **What if my teenager isn't happy?**

If rhinoplasty is being done for the right reasons, then you can expect to have a very satisfied and happy teenager. You will likely also notice an increase in their self-esteem and confidence, but the results are not going to be immediate. It is important that both you and your teenager are aware that the nose takes a long time until all the swelling resolves and the well-defined tip that we talked about may take months before it is finally realized. This can be very difficult for a teenager who is used to immediate gratification. A nose that is perfectly small and defined on the day we take the splint off is likely to be a nose that will be too small years later. It is important to be patient.

On the very rare occasion that after one year the teenager still isn't satisfied, I will discuss with you options to achieve or address any concerns. Very rarely, a teenager's disappointment is not due to their nose, but secondary to other stressors in their life. If I believe that further addressing the nose will not lead to satisfaction or if I feel additional treatment is not within their best interest, then I will recommend not proceeding any further. Exceedingly rare, a referral to a counselor may be necessary. If I believe further treatments will be of benefit, then we can discuss this option. Regardless of what was done to the nose, if it was done by an experienced rhinoplasty surgeon, then, likely, the internal structures of the nose were respected and a strong framework was left intact. This will make it easier to help your teenager realize their expectations through a very minimal procedure, and frequently, this can be done in the office. If the rhinoplasty was performed by a less than experienced plastic surgeon then a complete revision and restructuring of the nose may be necessary. I can discuss these options with you at a consultation. Either way, I will see to it that you and your teenager are completely informed and satisfied.

*“I have done hundreds of rhinoplastys on teenagers  
for the right reasons.”*



## **How do I determine who is the best doctor to perform my teenager's rhinoplasty?**

There are so many important factors that go into choosing a plastic surgeon for your teenager and unfortunately, this is too often overlooked. If you mistakenly choose a less than qualified expert, you may be sending your child down long trail before they are happy again. Be careful here - I can't stress this enough.

A teenager's nose is different from an adult's, and the techniques I use to perform rhinoplasty for an 18-year-old are different from that for a 38-year-old. The approaches, maneuvers and instruments I use are all very specific to the age of the patient. Choosing a doctor who understands the differences in functionality, physiology and anatomy of the nose at different ages is imperative as well. Changes that are made to a teenager's nose have to be maintained and last for the rest of their long lives. Being board certified in Otolaryngology (Ear, Nose and Throat) plus Facial Plastic Surgery allows me to combine the best of both specialties, making sure I can deliver the best outcome possible respecting both the breathing function and the aesthetics of the nose.

At our center, you can feel confident that you are choosing a surgeon with an enormous level of experience in the inside and outside of the nose. In over 6 years of training and 11 years of private practice, I have treated well over a thousand kids and have done hundreds of rhinoplastys on teenagers for the right reasons. As a terra cotta clay sculptor and an adjunct professor at DePaul University teaching a course on the Science of Beauty, the philosophies, strategies and aesthetics of shaping a nose to one that best fits your teenagers face is my expertise. But, as important, I am also the father of three daughters and have spent many nights contemplating and evaluating their mindset and choices. This experience provides me the innate ability to empathize with your decision.

## **What if it is too expensive?**

Every day we all make judgment calls on what we can comfortably afford and choosing to undergo rhinoplasty is no different. But please, whatever you do, resist selecting a surgeon based on price alone. This is not a service where you want to go with the cheapest price. This is your daughter or son's self-esteem and worth that you are putting into someone's hands. Please choose someone with enormous experience, artistic talent and empathy for your child. Too frequently, I see youngsters who have been unfortunately devastated with the outcome from a less than experienced provider. Trust me; you do not want this type of scenario.

I hope this introduction has been helpful for you. I believe that a well-informed patient is the best patient. Choosing to undergo a rhinoplasty can be a wonderful watershed moment in a person's life. At SDMD, it is our mission to make this a warm, comforting and positive experience for you and your family. Please do not hesitate to call my office or me at anytime if I can be of further help. I look forward to meeting with you.

Best Regards

Steve Dayan, MD



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