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Turn Back the Clock: Dr. Paul Frank Tells FWD the Latest Do's and Don'ts of Cosmetic Procedures

turn back the clock without losing time

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By Carrie Haynes

Fashion Wire Daily NY June 7, 2002 - Cosmetic procedures, both surgical and non-surgical, have become almost cliché, thanks to procedures like the lunch-hour boob job. But that doesn't stop Americans from signing up for an estimated 2.7 million wrinkle-erasing procedures and 300,000 liposuctions a year. Paul Jarrod Frank, M.D. and co-author of the newly launched book, "Turn Back the Clock Without Losing Time - A Complete Guide to Quick and Easy Cosmetic Rejuvenation," talks with FWD about the health risks behind these procedures. No matter how "quick and easy" the procedure, having any kind of work done is still serious business.

"There is no such thing as risk free," says Dr. Frank, who performs numerous treatments - including chemical peels, liposuction, laser procedures, hair transplants and fat transplants, botox injections and blepharoplasty - in his practice as a dermatologic surgeon. "Any patient that is going to come in - even for the simplest cosmetic procedure, like a facial peel, needs to understand the pros and cons."

"Never underestimate the risks from ANY medical procedure," Dr. Frank cautions, even though "the overindulgence and the ease of it" can be alluring. Case in point: sorority-like botox parties with plenty of freely flowing alcohol. While one-too-many cocktails may threaten to distort the facts, injecting a toxic substance into your face is indeed an issue deserving of some thought.

Botox and its recent FDA approval pose other problems that require careful consideration. Dr. Frank cautions that the widespread availability of Botox could mean "more inexperienced doctors doing it at cheaper prices, so it may have a bit of a backlash." It has also led to a sort of Botox bargaining, with prospective patients calling around to find the best deal on the paralytic agent. The good stuff is (always) going to be expensive, he says - especially when performed by qualified cosmetic surgeons -so don't jeopardize your health by trying to find the cheapest prices.

The main priority for any procedure should be the quality of the care. First, Dr. Frank says, "go to someone with experience: a cosmetic dermatologist or a plastic surgeon;" and second, "make sure that the doctor is board certified." Additionally, a qualified doctor must have significant training in cosmetic surgery. "There are lots of dermatologists that don't specialize in cosmetics -- you must determine what percentage of their profile practices it," he says. You want a physician with an impeccable track record, who performs cosmetic procedures on a daily basis.

In considering the health risks of various cosmetic procedures, it must be pointed out that part of the increasing trend is due to a heightened safety profile and an evaporating stigma. "The old stigma had to do with the fact that people were willing to take such risks, that they were actually willing to go under the knife, for the sake of vanity. Now that things are easier and safer, people want to share in the ease of it all." Still, the horror stories abound. Dr. Frank points to the "huge influx of non-physician performances. You can actually go to a spa [in New York, currently the only state that doesn't require you be a physician to use a laser] to inject botox or collagen. A laser is a fancy knife, it has to be used by someone who has years of training."

"It's another part of the whole backlash of oversimplifying potential risks."

In "Turn Back the Clock Without Losing Time - A Complete Guide to Quick and Easy Cosmetic Rejuvenation," Dr. Frank, along with co-author Rhoda S. Narins, M.D., educates readers on the new opportunities for staying well and looking young.

"Start early," he says. "Maintenance is the best thing. From the mid-twenties onwards, as age starts setting in, it's all about prevention."

But once the clock has been ticking for some time, Dr. Frank makes no pretenses. "The goal of these treatments is to rejuvenate, not re-create," he writes in the book's intro. Translation: "While I can create a younger version of the self based on improvement, I can't make a 60-year old look like a twenty year old, or make someone look entirely different, a physical alteration is not a legitimate expectation."