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Description

The number of teenagers in the U.S. that have had plastic surgery has doubled in the past eight years. NBC's Ann Curry looks into what is driving teens to have these procedures.

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Citation

MLA
"Teens and Plastic Surgery: When Is It Okay?" Ann Curry, correspondent. NBC Today Show.
Transcript

Teens and Plastic Surgery: When Is It Okay?

ANN CURRY, co-host:
And this morning on TODAY’S FAMILY, how young is too young to get plastic surgery? The number of teenagers in the US who've gone under the knife has doubled in the past eight years. So what is driving teens to have these procedures?

Plastic surgery. Some may do it to capture a piece of the glitz or the glamour of celebrity. But what if you are a teenager and surgery could take away the name-calling, the embarrassment, or the physical pain? Should parents let children have it and should children have it? People magazine investigated why many teens are going under the knife.

Ms. MICHELLE TAN (People Magazine): Well, we decided to do a story on teen plastic surgery because we noticed that there were a lot of teens who were looking for a way to improve their lives because they've been bullied or abused or really just been attacked because of the way that they looked.

CURRY: Unlike adults, who may use plastic surgery to turn back the clock, these teens used plastic surgery to fit in.

High schooler Hannah Olson endured what she calls horrifying comments about her triple D chest before deciding to get a breast reduction. John Escalante hid his "Dumbo" ears behind his hair until he learned that he would have to cut it to pursue his dream of becoming a firefighter. He had his ears pinned back at the age of 17. And Jen Selter faced nasty insults on Facebook like "pelican nose" until she had rhinoplasty at 15.

Dr. SAM RIZK (Plastic Surgeon): It's no different than kids getting braces for crooked teeth.

CURRY: Dr. Sam Rizk is Jen's surgeon.

Dr. RIZK: I think that having that stigma of a large nose taken care of allows the teenager to focus on other important aspects of their growth and their school.

CURRY: But psychiatrists say the first step for parents and children alike is to ask why.

Dr. CHARLES SOPHY (Psychiatrist): It's not always that body issue that is the issue. There's other stuff.
These children are part of families, they're part of communities, and there may be other things that are not working that are driving that need for the surgery.

CURRY: Plastic surgeons with teen patients recommend a series of at least four sessions with a therapist before approving surgery.

Dr. RIZK: I always ask them for their motivation. It's very important to basically understand their psychology.

CURRY: And another word of caution:

Dr. SOPHY: Mom and dad, please be sure your adolescent or your teen is aware that this is not a coping skill, that every time we feel uncomfortable about ourselves then we go out and we get surgery, because that's how we begin a huge line of problems.