



Cost of beauty

INVASIVE: FACE-LIFTS COME WITH RISKS

» The perils of chasing influencers' illusive vision of perfection.

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In an era dominated by social media, where filters, Facetune and carefully curated images reign supreme, a disturbing trend has emerged of young women pursuing invasive surgical face-lifts to achieve a fleeting and often unattainable vision of beauty.

This phenomenon, driven by the influence of celebrities and social media influencers, raises not only questions about self-worth and beauty ideals but also serious concerns about long-term consequences – physical, emotional and societal. How far is too much?

Dr Maureen Allem from Skin Renewal Clinics spoke to *The Citizen* about the importance of self-image, not overdoing plastic surgery and keeping facial tweaks natural and gradual.

The illusion of perfection

Celebrities and influencers project images that are polished, idealised and – crucially – often unattainable.

Through carefully staged photos, heavy editing and even surgical enhancements, they set a beauty standard that is both unrealistic and relentless.

Young followers, immersed in a digital world where the line between fantasy and reality blurs, often internalise these standards as benchmarks for their own appearance.

The consequences are devastating

► **Body dissatisfaction:** Comparing one's unfiltered self to an influencer's manipulated image fosters discontent and a distorted self-image.

► **Mental health struggles:** Anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem thrive when individuals feel they will never "measure up."

► **Normalisation of surgery as a quick-fix:** Young women are increasingly turning to invasive procedures to "correct" perceived imperfections, with little awareness of the risks or realities involved.



MESSAGE. Young women must be empowered to prioritise skin health, prevention and subtle, natural improvements. Pictures: iStock

The long-term ramifications of surgical face-lifts

While cosmetic procedures may offer instant gratification, face-lifts – designed to lift and tighten sagging tissue – are invasive surgeries with lifelong consequences. For young women, whose skin elasticity and collagen are still robust, these procedures are not only unnecessary but can accelerate ageing in ways they might not anticipate:

1. Premature ageing: Face-lifts at a young age can alter the skin and facial structure. Over time, as natural ageing continues, results may look unnatural, requiring additional surgeries to "correct" earlier work.

2. Scar tissue and damage: Repeated invasive procedures can lead to scar tissue buildup, impairing the skin's integrity and creating long-term irregularities.

3. Loss of facial identity: Over-correcting facial features often strips away individuality, leaving a person looking "done" or unrecognisable.

4. Emotional toll: The pressure to maintain surgically-enhanced results can foster insecurity and dependence on additional procedures, creating a cycle that is hard to escape.

The influence of the influencers

Social media influencers, often showcasing their cosmetic transformations as aspirational milestones, play a key role in normalising face-lifts among impressionable audiences. But this curated glamour masks important truths.

► **Minimisation of risks:** In-

fluencers rarely share the pain, recovery time, complications or emotional struggles they endure.

► **Unrealistic standards:** Followers may chase an influencer's final "after" photo without realising it is the result of multiple procedures, advanced filters and professional lighting – not a single surgery.

► **The business of influence:** Many influencers benefit financially from promoting cosmetic treatments, prioritising sponsorships over transparency.

This glamourised narrative of surgical solutions sends a dangerous message; that beauty is a destination, achieved through costly, high-risk shortcuts rather than natural care and acceptance.

The rise of natural beauty: a hopeful counter-movement

Amid this worrying shift towards authenticity and natural beauty is taking root. More influencers and role models are embracing minimalism, promoting subtle enhancements and encouraging self-acceptance.

This movement is significant:

► **Celebrating individuality:** Instead of striving for a homogenized ideal, young women are learning to appreciate their unique features.

► **Subtle enhancements:** Non-invasive treatments that promote skin health – such as microneedling, lasers, and medical-grade skincare – are gaining favour. These methods focus on enhancing the skin's integrity rather

er than altering its structure.

► **Healthy longevity:** By focusing on collagen stimulation, lifestyle changes and preventive care, women can age gracefully while maintaining their natural beauty.

The message is clear: a natural, well-maintained face that reflects you will always be more timeless than an over-sculpted, surgically altered appearance that conforms to temporary trends.

Shifting the narrative

It's time to redefine beauty as a celebration of individuality, health and authenticity – not as a relentless pursuit of an artificial ideal. Young women must be empowered to prioritise skin health, prevention and subtle, natural improvements that honour their features, not erase them.

Social media influencers and celebrities have a responsibility to be transparent and honest about their choices and the realities of invasive procedures. Followers deserve to know the risks and long-term effects – not just the filtered, picture-perfect outcomes.

The bottom line

Face-lifts and other invasive procedures may promise "perfection," but they come at a steep cost. Chasing unrealistic standards, especially at a young age, can lead to irreversible physical consequences and emotional distress. Instead, let's celebrate a more sustainable approach – one that nurtures self-confidence, embraces individuality, and fosters a healthier relationship with beauty.

True beauty lies not in the pursuit of perfection but in the confidence to embrace what makes you, you. The future of beauty is authenticity – let's choose it.



★ TALKING ABOUT...



Are movies really more violent than before?

Violence is increasingly present in movies, according to a US study. And the trend is seen even in films where crime is not the main theme.

Do today's movies contain more violence? So suggests a study titled Trends of Violence in Movies During the Past Half Century, published in the scientific journal JAMA Pediatrics, which investigated the presence of violence in movie productions over the past 50 years by analysing movie subtitles.

The researchers examined dialogue from over 160 000 English-language films produced between 1970 and 2020, focusing on the use of verbs such as "kill" or "murder" in the screenplays. The results are clear: violence in movie dialogue has increased significantly over the decades.

"Our findings suggest that references to killing and murder in movie dialogue not only occur far more frequently than in real life but are also increasing over time. This is more evidence that violence is a bigger part of the movies we watch than ever before," says the study's lead author, Babak Fotouhi, quoted in a news release.

Far from being confined to action films and thrillers, "murderous verbs" are also present in all film genres, the study points out. "Characters in noncrime movies are also talking more about killing and murdering today than they did 50 years ago," says study co-author Brad Bushman.

"Not as much as characters in crime movies and the increase hasn't been as steep. But it is still happening. We found increases in violence across all genres."

While these "murderous" terms are mostly used by male characters, female characters are increasingly beginning to adopt this language. – AFP