

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2012

your weekend



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THE DOMINION POST

Beauty and the

New Zealand men are following the worldwide trend when it comes to improving their appearance with surgery. But will they nip, tuck and tell? No way, writes **Diana Dekker**.

Mark (not his real name) has just had surgery to correct his gynecomastia (man boobs) and banish his tummy fat. The day after his surgery, he's still wearing a surgical suit, which fits like spandex, so he's not quite sure what the surgeon has done. He thinks it has all been achieved with liposuction.

"I left it to his judgment. I was on the table at 8am yesterday, in the recovery room at 10.30 and they wanted to get rid of me at 12. I sat on a couch in the afternoon and had a good sleep last night."

is relatively straightforward. It's a relatively common operation, a nice operation done under local anaesthetic."

Masters says the number of men looking for surgery has increased in the past decade, although women still dominate. The percentage of men "ebbs and flows with the season" but can be as much as 20 to 30 per cent.

And it's not just white-collar executives and office workers looking for strategic improvement. Builders, painters and electricians also front up.

Cosmetic surgery, he says "is more common than you'd think though there are no accurate New Zealand figures available".

Masters hasn't yet had anyone bringing in a picture of Brad Pitt or Dan

**Man boobs:
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out cosmetic surgery, the number of men wanting appearance-changing surgery has definitely increased.

"Twenty five years ago it was a commonly held belief that one didn't operate on men at all.

"There's been a rising awareness over that time. There is a world change and our country represents the change in the culture. It's not leading it."

Men, with this new awareness, have just about the same plethora of interventions as women. Masters does the full range of cosmetic surgery - "eyelids, chest, general body contouring, liposuction, ears and noses. The noses I do in men are often reparative."

Tummy tucks are less common in men than women, because it's harder to

Mark, 57, lives in (blank, but a major New Zealand city), has his own business (blank, except it's in the construction industry) and was operated on by (also blank, except the surgeon would have been happy to be named).

"This has to be totally anonymous," he says. "I don't want my name out there. This is personal and private."

A New Zealand bloke is always a bloke. He must show no overt signs of vanity, even if he's been to a plastic surgeon to, say, request a face like Sean Fitzpatrick in his heyday. This happens.

Cosmetic surgeons spoken to by *Your Weekend* estimate the number of Kiwi blokes, such as Mark, who are going under the knife to improve their appearance has increased 30 to 50 per cent over the past decade. Whether they've had an eyelid lift, ears pinned back, nose straightened, or man-boobs dealt to, most share one thing in common – a reluctance to talk publicly about it.

Wellington plastic surgeon John Masters says his male patients can be so nervous about being outed that they might time upper eyelid surgery, say, with a holiday, so they could go back looking refreshed, rather than altered, to their swish office or their manly building company.

"They are usually employed, heads of sales or chief executives perhaps," says Masters. "They need to be alert and vibrant and on the ball and not look sleepy and old. You can appear sleepy with too much upper eyelid. The surgery

Carter, wanting the ultimate hunk look.

"I'd be concerned if they did," he says. "Looking like Dan Carter needs a lot of work at the gym."

Pectoral and buttock implants are also rare in New Zealand, he says.

Plastic surgeon Chris McEwan, the Health Ministry's elective prioritisation clinical adviser, once had a patient wanting to look like Sean Fitzpatrick "in his heyday". McEwan compromised, operating to improve his weak jaw line. "It was making his face look feminine and stopping his ability to function the way he wanted to."

Shouldn't he have sent him off to a psychologist? There aren't many psychologists in New Zealand who do that sort of work.

McEwan always talks at length about motivation with his patients.

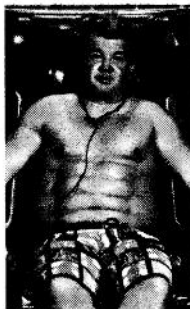
Masters, though he hasn't been asked to makeover an ordinary man to look like a prominent sportsman, has operated on a prominent sportsman to make him look like an ordinary man. The rugby player had man boobs.

"The effect can be profound. This Wellington representative rugby player would never change in front of his colleagues, which was a real bind. Most men with this condition present wearing quite loose clothing – that's one of the criteria – and six months down the line they're wearing a T-shirt, which was too embarrassing before."

McEwan confirms that, while Health Ministry operation figures do not single

operation with a high degree of patient satisfaction.'

HOWARD KLEIN
plastic surgeon



Australian paparazzo Darryn Lyons proudly showed off "slabs of abs surrounded by rolls of fat" on British TV show *Celebrity Big Brother*.

achieve a consistent result. He also does "lifts, and increasing non-surgical interventions like a bit of Botox, to get rid of a frown, a little bit of filler".

"In the last year I've tended to get more couples coming in for non-surgical stuff like Botox, almost like an outing."

But Masters rejects the idea that his patients, women as well as men, are aiming to be the beautiful people.

"People often see cosmetic surgery as an effort to acquire glamour. It's not about that for the majority of patients who are trying to return back to normal. They don't want to be noticed but to look good for themselves, to slow down the ageing process. They want to look refreshed, but with lines because they're normal.

"With surgery for gynaecomastia, guys aren't aiming to look as if they're always at the gym. They just want flat chests."

Penile enlargements? "I don't go there, for a multitude of reasons I've decided not to go there."

Implanted washboard abs? A man would need a suitable underlying shape to have washboard abs stacked on.

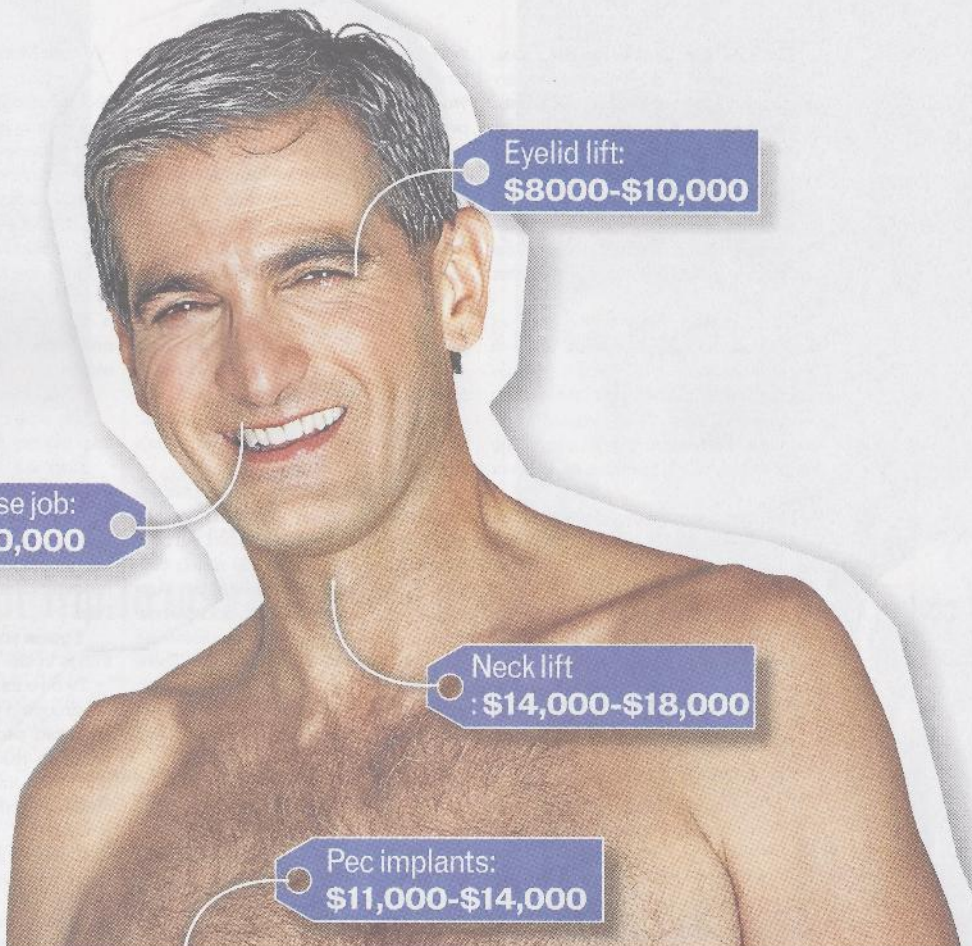
McEwan, too, wonders why an overweight person would consider implants to simulate gym-honed abs in the manner of Australian paparazzo Darryn Lyons. Lyons has been pictured proudly showing off slabs of abs surrounded by rolls of fat. "It's beyond me. If the rest of me looks like a sack I wouldn't see it as viable."

bloke

Plastic surgeon Howard Klein, Christchurch-based president of the Association of Plastic Surgeons, agrees that cosmetic surgery in men has become more acceptable, and says men tend to be more accepting than women when friends have a nip or tuck.

Klein finds men more realistic than women in matters of cosmetic surgery – “more matter-of-fact. They’re more decisive. It’s unusual to see a man come back three or four times to talk about it. They frequently say ‘I want my chin fixed’ and don’t come back to talk again.

“Men and women operate in the world differently. Men are very concerned about whether they will have a visible surgical appearance. Some women are, but on television you see women obviously operated on. Some women seem to be less concerned about that. A good cosmetic surgeon always strives for a natural appearance anyway. The biggest compliment is to hear people have said ‘Have you lost weight’.



Eyelid lift:
\$8000-\$10,000

Nose job:
\$10,000

Neck lift
:\$14,000-\$18,000

Pec implants:
\$11,000-\$14,000

people have said 'Have you lost weight', or 'Do you have a new outfit'. They know something is better but can't tell what it is. It's exactly the same for men."

Klein has seen a relatively rapid increase in the number of men looking to banish their man boobs. Patients can be fit and healthy, and aged 18 to 63. The operation is usually day surgery – he performs about 25 a year.

"Everyone thinks it's a feminising problem but it's not. As men age the tissue becomes more sensitive to circulating estrogen. Probably one-third of all men have a certain amount of gynecomastia. Diet and weightlifting can't fix it. It can be distressing, older men with enlarged breasts. It's a terrific operation with a high degree of patient satisfaction."

Masters performs surgery for gynecomastia every week or two.

"It's very easily treated and it can be a life-changing event.

"A man with one C-cup breast and the other normal who can't take his shirt off has an abnormality, a really functional deformity, like having one eye in the middle of a face."

Body dysmorphism disorder (BDD) is often linked with those who ask for cosmetic surgery and Klein says the disorder – irrational concern with body image – can affect men as well as women.

United States figures estimate 2 per cent of the population suffer from BDD but that 15 per cent of the people who look for cosmetic surgery do. ▷



Klein says those figures are ridiculous. "Most people who have plastic surgery are friendly, normal people. All plastic surgeons see such people occasionally. Generally it's pretty obvious, though it's true we've all been caught out. Last week I saw a woman with mild breast asymmetry, which is true of everyone. She was convinced it was the reason she had boyfriend problems and had lost her job."

Like Masters, Klein steers clear of penile enlargement. Nor is he likely to perform scrotal lifts "which would always inevitably be temporary because of gravity". "I tell people 'No' all the time, that what they're proposing might not be worth the time, expense or risk."

McEwan, too, says 'No' quite often. He may not be quite so blunt, but the gist can be, as he says: "Having your nose changed won't fix the problem. If you are an a...hole before you will still be an a...hole after."

The gay male community is credited with being more open to being surgically beautified but Klein says he sees no more gay men than straight blokes.

For men, like women, plastic surgery is a buyer-beware industry. McEwan notes that a plastic surgeon is trained and accredited by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and cosmetic surgeons are an unregulated group often working outside their usual

field. Dermatologists, for example, sometimes do cosmetic surgery. There's no way of knowing how many people practise cosmetic surgery.

"In Wellington there are six plastic surgeons and at least that number of GPs styling themselves as cosmetic surgeons. I would think there are twice the number of people outside plastic surgeons, including dermatologists who put a bit of filler in.

"Where do you stop it being a procedure and call it surgery? There's no way of doing it and one of the difficulties is trying to regulate these people."

Klein's advice to prospective cosmetic surgery patients is to verify a surgeon's credentials.

"When things go sideways is where people have surgery they don't need or done by people not fully trained. All over the world there are people doing cosmetic surgery who shouldn't be. Any surgery can have problems and the best insurance is for people to see someone properly trained. Ask questions. There are only about 50 registered plastic surgeons in the country and a whole lot of people who would like you to believe they're plastic surgeons.

"Botox is very commonly offered by people who are not plastic surgeons. I see people who want Botox who really need a facelift, or people who want a facelift who need Botox. People need to be aware of who they're seeing and ask a lot of questions."

As for Mark, nobody but his wife and possibly his grown-up children will be told about his man-boob reduction and tummy lipo – certainly not his staff, nor his mates.

"A lot of my friends would look at me as if I was absolutely crackers," he says. "It's not about them. It's about me. I've done it and I'm happy about it.

"My wife had her legs lipo-ed seven or eight years ago and, boy, did it make a difference. She had saddle-bag legs and now she's immaculate in that region.

"That gives me heart.

"My wife is a very supportive party to this and my kids take it as it comes."

Mark is fit and athletic, but he comes from what he calls "relatively big stock".

"I've been punctilious about eating and I go to the gym three times a week but I couldn't do anything about my breast and tummy areas, no matter what I did.

"I guess you could cut out all the good things in life, but life's for living."

Two years ago, Mark had surgery on his drooping eyelids.

"I told people about my eyes but I won't be telling them about the lipo. I don't think they need to know." He says "personal pride" prompted both interventions.

"I'm not a small guy and I like looking good. It wasn't a big decision to make.

"I'm very matter-of-fact about these things." ■