

JANUARY 2001

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Your most personal horoscope—ever!

"She will spend more money than she has, she will go against a trustworthy doctor's advice and she will ignore loved ones who show concern."

Cosmetic surgery, explains Dr. Witkin, can become a Band-Aid for deep emotional problems such as low self-esteem or an unhealthy relationship:

for self-renovation grew. She often wore long skirts to cover up her thighs; then she started thinking that maybe she didn't have to live with that, either. Liposuction was a tougher sell (it set Mom and Dad back another \$2,500), and it was hard to find a willing doctor. The first one refused, arguing that her fat content was too low.

But when the bandages finally came off her legs, Elissa cried joyful tears. "It was how I had always wanted to look," she says. At the time of the operation, she wore a size four or six. She now wears a size one or two.

Chances are if Elissa wanted to shrink herself even further, she could find a surgeon who'd comply. "Not all doctors have the sense of responsibility to stop a patient from going overboard," says William Binder, M.D., facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon and clinical professor at UCLA who specializes in revisionist plastic surgery (he fixes the mistakes made by other doctors). He'll tell you countless stories of plastic surgery addicts who've gone too far: women who have come to him unable to breathe because they had so much cartilage removed that their noses collapsed; women who have undergone liposuction repeatedly and compulsively, only to gain weight back in odd places like their back, sides or forearms (a.k.a. the poodle effect).

"First of all, not all certifications are equal," says Jeffrey C. Anderson, a Texas lawyer who has been handling medical malpractice suits for 26 years. "Doctors who have been approved by the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery may seem qualified, but in fact they are held to much lower standards than doctors certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery." As far as the surgeon's

liability, the chances that he'd be held accountable in court for performing an unnecessary procedure are slim. It would be like trying to sue your stylist for giving you the haircut you asked for.

"Cosmetic surgery isn't about a doctor determining what you need," says Anderson. "That's your decision. The only responsibility the doctor has is to clearly outline the risks—unsightly scarring, excessive bleeding, sagging skin, infection, numbness. And death."

### Knowing when to stop

Lauren Knadler, a 27-year-old in the fashion industry, didn't let a botched nose job stop her from getting breast implants. "After the first rhinoplasty, my nose wasn't even, but the doctor wouldn't take my calls," she remembers. It took a year and a half for her to summon the courage to find a new surgeon and go back for another operation to fix it. During that visit she decided to get her breasts enlarged from a size 34B to a 36C. "I know people say it's who you are that matters, not how you look, but I love beauty, I love details. And the details of my nose and breasts bugged me," says Lauren, who figures she'll have more surgery as she gets older.

She figures right. Anyone who has had more than two procedures is headed down a slippery slope, according to Anderson: "The more cosmetic surgery you get, the greater the odds you'll want more," because as the body ages and sags, the effects of the surgery can begin to look increasingly unnatural and require touch-ups. And once you alter one part of your body, it's easy to fixate on other "imperfections"—and you'll want them fixed. It's a dangerous cycle.

The bottom line is that if a woman doesn't realize she's resorting to cosmetic surgery for the wrong reasons, she's not likely to stop. It may take an intervention by family and friends to convince her that she's going overboard. "A plastic surgery 'junkie' doesn't think there's anything wrong with what she's doing," says Dr. Witkin. "She'll just keep looking in the mirror and searching for the fix that will make her life better." Or at least smoother. And less and less real. ■

## Profile of an addict

### CINDY JACKSON'S FACIAL PROCEDURES

- Skin resurfacing
- Face-lift
- Cheek implants
- Dermabrasion
- Fat transfer
- Jawline liposuction
- Chemical peel
- Hair transplant
- Upper and lower eye lift
- Rhinoplasty

- Lip augmentation
- Cosmetic dentistry
- Chin reduction
- Semi-permanent makeup

### BODY PROCEDURES

- Waistline and abdominal liposuction
- Hip and inner thigh liposuction
- Outer thigh liposuction (ultrasonic)
- Knee liposuction



Cindy in 1979



Cindy today

"Controlling your body obsessively, the same way a bulimic or anorexic does, may be a way of compensating for other parts of your life that you are unhappy with but feel helpless to change."

"No matter how many aspects of her appearance change," adds Dr. Witkin, "this person will never feel satisfied with the result."

### Are doctors doing women wrong?

Ever since a classmate mentioned to 20-year-old Elissa Lane that her nose stuck out when she tied her hair back (à la Demi Moore in *About Last Night*), she'd been dying for plastic surgery—even though she couldn't afford it on her own. Eventually she got her parents to spot her the \$3,200. The surgery went so well (think Demi's nose in *Ghost*) that the USC student's hunger