

This document is a practical tool to guide you through the process of gathering information about aesthetic products and procedures. It will also give suggestions about how you may approach selecting a clinic or practitioner for any medical aesthetic treatment that you subsequently decide to undertake.

## First things first

There are numerous reasons why people choose to have medical non-surgical or surgical procedures. It is crucial that you are making the right decision for you.

You should be having the procedure because it is YOU who wants to make the changes. No treatment should be undertaken on the insistence or suggestion of any one else such as your partner, your friends, your practitioner or even your employer.

You may, however, be having the procedure to enhance how you feel about the way people perceive you. An increase in attractiveness is often linked with increased self-esteem and successful interpersonal relationships.

Whatever your reasons, it is important that you make a realistic appraisal of what it is that you would like to change and or improve in your physical appearance.

## Basic Research

### **Educate yourself about treatment options, their limitations and risks.**

Carry out your own research first – use the Consulting Room™ to explore treatment options and more detailed procedure information for the area that you would like to change. Compare recovery times, and costs – do you have the budget/can you take time off work if required?

Use our links section and search engines for further research about procedures.

This may take some time, but it is well worth educating yourself about what is available – this will help you to ask the right questions if you decide to proceed further and speak to a treatment provider.

### **Draw up a short list of clinics or practitioners to contact.**

Browse the Legislation section of the Consulting Room to explore the range of different treatment providers available in the U.K. market, and then use our powerful Clinic Search function to help draw up a short list of treatment providers. If we cannot help you, try other more general search directories such as [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com), [www.scoot.co.uk](http://www.scoot.co.uk), [www.thomsonlocal.com](http://www.thomsonlocal.com), or the Yellow Pages and Thomsons local directories.

Searching for providers using keywords in search engines (such as cosmetic surgery) can bring up a plethora of websites from clinics and practitioners around the country (who have usually paid for sponsored links), which can make it difficult to screen for a local clinic or practitioner (especially if they don't have a website!).

We also suggest that you ask friends (especially those that may have undergone any aesthetic procedures) for any recommendations, visit your local GP – especially if you are considering any cosmetic surgery procedures, and talk to any nurses that you may know for their advice.

Depending upon the number of local providers available in your area, and the sort of treatment that you are seeking, you should draw up a shortlist of at least 3 potential treatment providers to contact initially.

## Phoning a Clinic

Your first contact with a medical aesthetic treatment provider is likely to be via the telephone. Your call will generally be answered by a receptionist or medical secretary. They may not be able to answer all your questions but they should be able to transfer you to someone who can, or arrange for someone to call you back with the information you require. Written information should be available for them to post or e-mail to you.

Make sure that you read our "Phoning a Clinic" guide in the Useful Tips section of our site. We have also listed below some suggested questions to ask in your first telephone contact. This may help you to screen clinics and draw up a short list for ones that you want to make an appointment with.

**Can you give me more information about available treatments that may help me – do you have an information brochure?**

**Who carries out the treatment and what is their experience?**

**Are you registered with the Healthcare Commission?** (Applicable for cosmetic surgery and laser/IPL treatments. Please see the Legislation section of our site.)

**If you are enquiring about a procedure requiring surgery, don't forget to ask where the operation is performed.**

**Can you give me some idea about the cost?**

**If I book an appointment, who would I see and is there a consultation fee? (usually only applicable for cosmetic surgery enquiries).**

Try and rate objectively the answers given and your overall first impressions about the helpfulness of the clinic staff that you spoke to. You may find it useful to rate your overall response to questions using the scale suggested below in order to help you draw up a short list of clinics to make an appointment with:

Poor	Notes:
Satisfactory	
Good	
Excellent	

## First Visit to a Clinic

The person you will initially see to discuss any treatment will depend on the particular set up of the clinic. It may be that you will not see the practitioner who may subsequently carry out the treatment, but a patient counsellor or sales counsellor instead. These people will often have expert knowledge about the treatments that the clinic offers and be able to answer many, if not all, of your questions. They should be able to put you at ease about the procedure you are thinking of having and explain all the potential risks. You should not feel at all pressurised into having any treatment and with surgery particularly there should be a “cooling off period” of at least two weeks between your consultation and any surgical procedure you may decide to have.

It is important, however, that you meet the practitioner who will be carrying out your treatment **before** you finally commit to anything. This is particularly important if you are going to have any form of cosmetic surgery. The first time you meet the surgeon should not be on the day of your operation!

Make sure that you read our “First visit to a Clinic” option in the Useful Tips section of our site.

### How to prepare for your first appointment:

- 1) Take a list of questions you may have for the surgeon or counsellor.
- 2) Take a list of medications that you may be taking for reference
- 3) For some treatments it is also important to know if you have any medical reasons which would prevent you from having the procedure that is suitable for you. Please be prepared to answer any questions relating to your past medical history and inform the practitioner if you are pregnant or currently trying for a baby – it may be important.
- 4) For cosmetic surgery procedures it can be useful to bring some photos to provide a visualisation for the surgeon on the results you desire and DON'T desire.
- 5) Be prepared to sign a consent form for any treatment that you may subsequently agree to undertake – but please ensure that you read it properly first.

### Things to watch out for in your first visit to a clinic:

- Beware of the practitioner or counsellor who fails to listen to your concerns or fails to bring the risks and complications of your chosen procedure to your attention.
- Be wary if they start pointing out other areas of the body that they may be able to treat that you are not concerned about.
- Trust your instincts as well. Look at how clean the clinic is, the friendliness of the reception staff, how much time you have for your consultation and whether they try to rush you into a decision. If you have a bad feeling about someone or something - there's usually a reason.

The list of suggested Questions to Ask below is not comprehensive and not all of these questions will be appropriate for you.

It is meant to be a useful guide so that you can **HIGHLIGHT** the numbers of the questions that you do wish to ask at your consultation. In addition you may want to list additional more detailed questions pertinent to individual procedures, such as surgical variations and choice of implant materials used etc.

## Clinic and Practitioner Assessment

Practitioner/Counsellor \_\_\_\_\_ Visit Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Web \_\_\_\_\_

Practitioner qualifications \_\_\_\_\_

Membership of medical organisations \_\_\_\_\_

Healthcare Commission registration number and any report (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please see the Legislation section of the Consulting Room™ for more details about qualifications and the Healthcare Commission).*

### **Example of general questions to ask if you are thinking of having either non-surgical or surgical treatments administered by a medical practitioner.**

1) Ask what treatment options are suitable for you for the area that you are interested in improving?

2) How do they compare in terms of expected results, pain, recovery time, safety, and cost?

3) Are there any medical reasons why you would not be suitable for any of these procedures?

4) How often, if at all, will the procedure need to be repeated?

5) How many of the procedures, that you are interested in, do they perform every month?

6) Can I view your before & after treatment photographs?

7) May I speak with any of your patients who have had similar procedures? Do you have a patient/referral list so that I may call them?

8) Do you offer any treatment guarantees (i.e. another procedure if this one doesn't work?) Can I have this in writing?

9) Are costs quoted all inclusive, or are there any additional extras?

10) Has the practitioner ever been involved in any medical malpractice complaints? If yes, find out the details.



## Rating a Clinic or Practitioner

You may or may not schedule a date for treatment at the end of a consultation - you are by no means obligated to, and as we recommend that you visit more than one provider (especially for cosmetic surgery procedures) it is advisable for you to think about your choices first.

Following your consultation with a practitioner (i.e. the person doing the procedure) you should have enough information to consider, and you should also be able to request a second meeting, if need be, should you feel that you need to ask any additional questions in order to reach a decision.

Again, it can be useful to jot down a few notes both during and after the consultation. This is helpful, especially when you are going on several consults, as recommended. It's very easy to get mixed up and

In order to help you make an objective comparison between different clinics and practitioners we suggest

• <b>Attitude of staff:</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>Appearance and cleanliness of clinic:</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>Patient information materials:</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>Consultation – informed &amp; relaxed?</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>Qualifications &amp; Training of Practitioner</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>Experience of Practitioner</b>	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
• <b>All questions answered:</b>	Yes	No		
• <b>Patient referral list available:</b>	Yes	No		
• <b>Viewed before &amp; after photos:</b>	Yes	No		

**OVERALL RATING:**            **Poor**                    **Satisfactory**                    **Good**                    **Excellent**

Please note that the Consulting Room™ provides this document to help guide you in your research for appropriate advice and treatment related to aesthetic medicine. We are not a definitive information resource, however, and cannot guarantee that any of the guidelines suggested will result in you getting the right advice or treatment for you. Please see the Consulting Room website **Privacy Policy** for more details.