



## Botched cosmetic surgeries prompt new patient safety information

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Recent deaths and other medical emergencies involving patients undergoing cosmetic surgery have prompted one of Australia's leading medical specialty colleges to develop key safety information on anaesthesia and sedation.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) said recent fatal incidents and reports of botched cosmetic procedures had highlighted the importance of anyone considering a cosmetic procedure to seek specialist medical advice beforehand.

Australians now spend \$1 billion a year on cosmetic procedures and treatments — more per capita than the US.

New patient safety information "*Anaesthesia and cosmetic surgery*" prepared by the college is aimed at helping consumers to learn and understand the important facts about anaesthesia for cosmetic procedures.

ANZCA trains doctors to become specialist anaesthetists and is the organisation that governments and other doctors turn to for advice on safe anaesthesia.

ANZCA President Dr Rodney Mitchell said a factsheet had been developed by accredited specialist anaesthetists for anyone planning to have cosmetic surgery in Australia or New Zealand which covers off the questions people should ask before having a procedure.

"From breast augmentation to liposuction, thousands of cosmetic surgical procedures are carried out across Australia and New Zealand every year. Nearly all of them will require the use of anaesthetic drugs. This will range from a low-dose local anaesthetic to the use of sedation drugs, or a more complex general anaesthetic," Dr Mitchell explained.

"Australia and New Zealand are two of the safest places in the world to have a procedure involving anaesthesia, but all anaesthetics have risks so it is important to talk to your doctor before about your options. Discuss any medical conditions or allergies you have, and any medication you are taking."

Important information such as whether the practitioner is qualified to give an anaesthetic, the different types of anaesthesia, where the procedure is being performed and whether it is licensed are all covered in the factsheet.

Dr Mitchell said while cosmetic surgery is the only type of surgery that does not require a referral from a GP, ANZCA advises consumers to at least talk to their GP about what they would like to have done. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons are also available for advice.

**Key points about anaesthesia and cosmetic procedures are:**

- General anaesthetics must always be administered by a specialist anaesthetist or another medical practitioner who is specially trained to deliver general anaesthesia.
- Drugs for sedation may be given by a medical practitioner who is not an anaesthetist but that person must be skilled in resuscitation. All specialist anaesthetists have these skills.
- Low dose local anaesthetics can usually be safely administered, however, large doses need to be given by specialist anaesthetists as they carry significant risks of complications, including seizures and cardiac arrest.

*Anaesthesia isn't sleep. It's so much deeper* is the theme for this year's **National Anaesthesia Day** which falls on Tuesday **October 16**. The day is organised by ANZCA and marks the first time ether anaesthetic was demonstrated in Boston, Massachusetts in 1846. National Anaesthesia Day 2018 encourages patients to talk to their anaesthetist about how they can prepare for their operation, their wellbeing during their operation and their recovery. It also challenges the widely held misconception that having a surgical procedure under general anaesthesia is the same as being asleep.