

# COSMETIC SURGERY & BEAUTY

*Because Nobody's Perfect*

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**ALEX EU ON COSMETIC SURGERY & HIS FAMOUS FRIENDS!** Page 52

**BEAUTY+**

- 10 Nail Myths
- Get **Booty Beautiful**
- Our favourite beauty products **under RM30**

**6-PACK ABS THROUGH LIPO** Page 95

**SEPARATING FAT FROM FICTION** Page 72

**PLUS:**

- EXTREME MAKEOVERS
- BETTER THAN LASIK!

**BYE BYE FAT**

**WE SUCK IT OUT & WORK IT OFF**

**"I NEARLY DIED TAKING DIET PILLS"**

**6 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF LIPOSUCTION**

**"TUMMY TUCK ME!"**

WARNING: GRAPHIC PHOTOS

**HOW TO GET SLIM, SLEEK CALVES**

**NEW! SINGAPORE FOCUS!**

- How To Be a **RUNWAY BRIDE**
- **Medi-Spas**
- Aging with **Grace**

**A NOSE BY ANY OTHER NAME...**

Page 105

**LADY DOCTORS**  
**SHARE THEIR BEAUTY SECRETS**

Page 128

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We've watched the show, and many others like it. But is having more than one cosmetic surgery procedure at a go a risky move? Veena Sidhu discusses the issue with Brazilian plastic surgeon based in Singapore, Dr. Marco Faria Correa.

In reality shows like *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*, we follow the transformation journeys of individuals that are selected to undergo literally, what one would call, an extreme makeover.

Flaws of the face, body and even teeth are highlighted and worked upon in a six week documented period. These individuals spend a day in surgery, and the rest of the time recovering, exercising, and adjusting to their new look.

After this period, *Voila!* They are much better looking – but not without the hefty price of their surgeries, of course.

But are there any risks associated with extensive and multiple surgeries performed at a go? Or is it a better option to have all your procedures done at once, saving you the trouble of repeated visits, anaesthetic administration, and downtime?

### THE REAL WORLD IS NOT SO DIFFERENT

While we watch the abovementioned shows, we succumb to the fact that as far as reality TV goes, people will go to extreme lengths to titillate human fascination – particularly when it comes to makeovers.

So we tell ourselves that only on TV will we find individuals jumping on the surgery table for more than one procedure in a session.

But is this true? Or it is happening in the real world, regardless of whether a TV crew is present to document the change?

Brazilian plastic surgeon practicing in Singapore, Dr. Marco Faria Correa, sees many cases like this, and even performs several extreme makeovers at his practice.

"The term extreme makeover was created by American TV. It means to do a lot of things or improvements to one's physical out-

look at a go. I see and work on several patients that come in to have a 'marathon' session of several procedures done at a time. For example, many patients that come in for a face and neck lift, also opt to have something else done, like a nose or chin augmentation, or upper and lower eyelid blepharoplasty and micro-lipo filling job while they are at it," explains Dr. Marco.

Contrary to popular belief, makeover reality TV doesn't necessarily subject an individual to a day of extensive surgery because that is what people are fascinated to watch, but



Dr. Marco sees and works on several patients that come in to have several cosmetic procedures done at a time.



rather, because time is a factor when it comes to these shows. The same can apply to the daily lives of many individuals seeking various procedures.

"People are different. Some people don't have that much time to spare, and can only afford to take about two to three weeks leave from their work. So while they are at it, they might as well have everything done at a go," says Dr. Marco.

He adds, "Then there are also individuals that prefer to have their procedures broken down into several sessions – to heal from one procedure, then come back at a later date to have the next one. This too, is not uncommon. It's really up to the individual."

### COMMON MARATHON PROCEDURES

So what is the regular patient requesting to have done in a marathon surgery session? Do these individuals wake up one day and decide they want to look (very) different and find a surgeon that will make that happen?

Dr. Marco explains, "Usually, those asking for more than one procedure are addressing issues that are worthwhile. For example, it is normal for a woman who has undergone childbirth to have droopy breasts, a loose tummy, buttocks that have lost volume, and some additional fatty areas here and there. It is normal for these women to ask to fix all these areas of concern at a go."

He adds, "In these instances, we

commonly perform tummy tucks, breast lifts, and even vaginal rejuvenation. In some instances, gluteoplasty (buttock augmentation) is also requested."

According to Dr. Marco, this is the common demographic of individuals opting for extreme makeovers or marathon sessions – mothers after childbirth. He adds that in all cases, it is the request of the patient and not the surgeon to have more than one surgery.

"It is the patient that comes in and asks if it is possible. When we tell them yes, many are happy and choose to have everything done at the same time," he states.

Another common marathon session according to Dr. Marco involves facelifts. He says that many patients request to have nose jobs, chin jobs, cheek implants, and the like, while they are nipping and tucking their faces. In some cases, some might opt for a breast lift or implants while also having a facelift.

"The combination of procedures really isn't that important as any surgery can be combined. Some people even opt for a nose job while they are in for a hernia operation! What is important is that the more extensive procedure is performed first, and if there isn't too much bleeding and if there is still time and the patient is stable, then the other procedures can be performed," notes Dr. Marco.

He continues, "However, there are exceptions – particularly for surgeries that involve contamination and hold

## My Extreme Makeover Sally\* shares her story.

I am 36 years old and a mother of two. Before I had my children, I was in the best of shape and took very good care of my body. I've always been skinny and never really saw myself gaining extra weight or having any loose skin anywhere.

This all changed of course, after having my two children. From having a body I was happy with, I was left with loose skin around my belly area. I was not happy with the way my skin was after giving birth twice. The skin was really stretched and it didn't matter how hard I worked to get back in shape, the area around my belly remained loose. My breasts were also droopy after all the breastfeeding.

I've always been young at heart and didn't enjoy wearing outfits to cover these flaws – particularly when I went swimming. I hated the one-piece grandmother pool wear! On top of that, I became self-conscious every time I had to bend down to pick up my kids – I was afraid my blouse would rise and show my loose skin.

I decided to have a tummy tuck and a breast lift with implants after my husband and I decided that two children was it for us. I wanted my old body back and was thrilled when my surgeon informed me that both procedures could be performed at the same time. I found this to be ideal, as I didn't want to be in bed recovering for too long (and in more than one instance) and the idea of waking up with these areas fixed at the same time was very appealing. I'm a little impatient by nature and like to see results as soon as possible!

The night before surgery I was very excited. I was a little bit nervous, but overall ready to have my surgeries and see the new me.

After the surgery, I was a little sore. But after going through childbirth, I think a woman can face any kind of pain! It was hard to move around at first, but as the days passed, the soreness began to subside.

I spent two days in hospital, but needed help with my bandages and getting out of bed when I was home. I was extra careful, as I didn't want to split open any of my stitches.

Today, I feel fantastic about my body and think that I look better now than when I was 20! I bought new fun clothes and have of course also bought some very nice two-piece bikinis to show off my new belly!

When it comes to having more than one procedure at a go, I would definitely recommend it to others. After all, if you're going to go through the pain, why not have it over and done with at once?

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their procedures at a go, and they may also feel very weak after surgery. This can delay healing by a few more days."

Ideally, candidates for extreme makeovers should be in the best of health. Dr. Marco explains that they shouldn't suffer from existing conditions such as diabetes or heart problems as these can complicate surgery. So, for such patients, surgery in stages is preferable.

Apart from a physical evaluation, surely there must be a mental check to ensure that all potential patients are in the right frame of mind? After all, some might say that to opt for more than one procedure at a time sits on the border between incredible bravery and incredible lunacy!

"As any cosmetic procedure goes, there is always an evaluation, which begins on the first consultation with your surgeon. Every surgeon has the instinct to evaluate the mental conditions of their patients. When patients come in requesting for procedures with unrealistic results, we usually turn them down or

a risk of infection. For example, surgeries involving the intestines, colon or heart, should not be combined with cosmetic surgery."

The other thing to bear in mind is the duration of being under general anaesthesia. While drugs today are more advanced and are safer than before, it is still not advisable to be 'under' for more than nine hours.

"Usually, eight to nine hours of general anaesthesia is the limit, and one should not take the risk and exceed this. That is why the more extensive procedure is performed first, and if time permits, the other smaller procedures can be performed," advises Dr. Marco.

### MAKE ME OVER!

Surgery, whether one or more is performed at a time, bears some risk. Therefore, it is always important to have a physical evaluation before undergoing any surgical procedure.

"All pre-operation evaluations are the same, regardless of the number of procedures one is having done. Not only that, the same amount of medication, anaesthesia and post-operative care is administered. The only thing different between conventional single surgery and extreme makeovers is the time involved," says Dr. Marco.

Dr. Marco points out a very interesting fact. "The other thing to remember is that, the rate of healing by the body after surgery, no matter how many procedures are performed, is the same. In about two weeks, one should be fully recovered from any surgery they might've had," he explains.

This fact seems to be the winning reason as to why one might opt to undergo a marathon session of cosmetic surgery. After all, if you would like to fix more than one thing about yourself, why not get it over and done with, and be a new person after only two weeks? It definitely beats having to go

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**— DR. MARCO FARIA CORREA, BRAZILIAN PLASTIC SURGEON BASED IN SINGAPORE**

through the whole recovery process more than once!

The other plus point is that the dollars and cents spent will also amount to less, as fees for hospitalisation and the lot, are a one-time incidence.

Regardless of the plus points, Dr. Marco stresses, "While the body heals in a fixed amount of time, it is still very important that the surgeon monitors the amount of blood lost during surgery. If the patient loses too much blood, they may not be able to have all

refer them to a psychologist. When the patient is accurate in his or her aesthetic concerns, then we proceed with surgery," says Dr. Marco.

He adds, "Cosmetic surgery is to make people happy. But in order to be happy, you have to have realistic expectations of what surgery can achieve. As surgeons, we always ensure the patient understands the reality of the surgical outcome and what we can offer them. If this is not the case, we do not perform the surgery." **CS&B**