

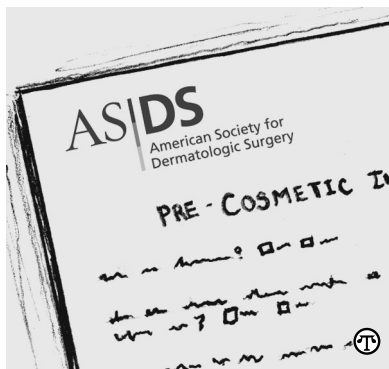
Be Smart About Skin Surgery

(NAPSA)—Seemingly minor cosmetic enhancements such as laser hair removal, chemical peels and Botox® treatments are medical-surgical procedures that should be performed by a qualified dermasurgeon or under the close supervision of one.

The American Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ASDS) urges consumers to check a practitioner's qualifications and credentials before undergoing any procedure to avoid the risk of complications from substandard treatment.

"Be prudent and selective when evaluating your options for any possible cosmetic procedure. It's not enough to rely on word of mouth," said New York dermasurgeon Rhoda S. Narins, MD, president of ASDS.

Dr. Narins added that serious side effects, such as infection, scarring and pigmentation disorders, often occur following procedures performed independently by non-physician practitioners. She cited an ASDS member survey in which 41 percent of respondents said they have seen a significant increase in the number of patients seeking corrective treatment for damage caused by untrained practitioners who performed laser hair removal, chemical peels, acne therapy and other procedures. Many said they had patients with second and third degree burns,



scarring and permanent nerve damage caused by faulty hair-removal treatments.

"It is critical to communicate as strongly as possible the documented risks of invasive cosmetic procedures performed by someone other than a qualified dermasurgeon," said Dr. Narins. "Therefore, it is our responsibility to protect consumers from the unfortunate proliferation of non-physician providers who typically don't have the necessary medical training and qualifications to diagnose the condition, perform the procedure and adequately handle complications when they occur."

In response to this concern, New York and other states have enacted laws stipulating that laser and light-based hair removal procedures are considered medical treatments that must be performed by qualified physicians or

under their supervision.

Ultimately it's "buyer beware" and consumers should follow these tips from ASDS prior to undergoing any cosmetic procedure:

- Make sure a doctor is on site
- Check credentials to be sure the doctor performing or overseeing the procedure is board certified in dermatology or another specialty with equivalent training and experience

- Ask questions no matter how minor they may seem

- Be sure your medical history is taken

- Insist on having an initial evaluation by a dermasurgeon to determine if a laser technique or other procedure is appropriate for your skin type

- Talk about pain management options to avoid risks of general anesthesia.

ASDS has produced a questionnaire based on these points. Consumers can print a copy from the ASDS Web site at www.asds.net, and bring it with them to their doctor's office.

Consumers seeking additional information about skin surgery treatments and referrals to ASDS member dermasurgeons are encouraged to contact the ASDS Consumer Hotline, 1-800-441-ASDS (2737), during weekday business hours or log on at www.asds.net.