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BEAUTY ON A BUDGET

The current state of the economy has resulted in some significant “nipping and tucking” in the demand for most consumer goods. Although the beauty and esthetic-procedure industry has been mostly resilient to date, that could certainly change in the near future. And yet, global makeup sales rose about 5%, to \$36.8 billion in 2007, reports *Global Cosmetic Industry* magazine, with sales of lipstick, eyeliner and the like expected to grow 3% each year through 2011.

One explanation for the steady demand, is offered by Mitchell Barnes, co-owner of Carter Barnes Hair Artisans in Atlanta. “In an uneasy economy,” he suggests, “people become uneasy when it comes to job security. We notice people tend to want to project a better image, so they dress better and keep themselves better groomed.”

This comports with the “lipstick theory,” a hypothesis developed by Leonard Lauder, chairman of Estée Lauder Companies. It maintains that when the economy is shaky, sales increase as women enhance their moods with inexpensive lipstick and other affordable adornments.

Atlanta-based dermatologists Dr. Richard Sturm and Dr. Harold Brody, and plastic surgeon Dr. Mark Codner say they have seen little or no change in demand for either medical dermatological care, or cosmetic services in the past year in their practices. Explains Dr. Sturm, “Whereas people may not be able to justify or budget for larger cosmetic surgery, maintenance with Botox, or one of the many excellent fillers available is much more affordable [and less scary to many]. The results from current techniques are extremely gratifying, with visible, yet subtle, immediate improvement.”

Dr. Brody agrees, “I don’t think most patients turn to products instead of what a medical skin doctor can provide, unless they are totally unable to save for even the most inexpensive procedure.” In Dr. Codner’s practice, demand for non-surgical procedures such as laser resurfacing, chemical peels and filler injections has increased this year, especially

among younger patients.

Although interest in cosmetic services remains high, the temptation to trim the budget is strong. Consumers need to beware of shortcuts that in the long run may cost them more.

CAUTION AHEAD

In general, I recommend caution when considering beauty-on-a-budget destinations. In countries including Mexico, Costa Rica and Hungary, doctors and private clinics offer plastic surgery, Lasik eye procedures and dental treatment to foreigners for considerably less than the price the same services would cost at home.

One concern is service after the sale. To whom do you turn if the results do not turn out as you envisioned? In the U.S., consumers have access to state licensing and other boards, whose equivalents may not exist in other countries.

Author, Cindy Jackson, a cosmetic surgery authority who has undergone a complete physical transformation and dozens of procedures, explains on her Web site, “Results can never be guaranteed, but your best insurance against an unsatisfactory result is undergoing cosmetic surgery as an informed patient. What you don’t know can hurt you. Intelligent, educated people fall into the same traps every day of the week.” The key, she says, is to be certain that wherever you choose to get your surgery done, there are proper avenues for recourse in case of problems.

Correcting a botched case is a complicated matter, and returning to the surgeon for repeat or repair surgery may even further complicate correcting the problem. Other suggestions include these:

- Choose wisely when selecting physicians or dentists for cosmetic procedures. If budget is a concern, understand that the risks are simply too high not to choose someone qualified. You are better off saving until you can afford the same procedure with a proven reputable and certified physician or dentist. Do your homework; consult the Better Business Bureau, appropriate state boards, leading medical

- and dental schools and reputable Internet sites.
- Atlanta dermatologist Dr. David Levine explains that although products may improve overall appearance, they are not great substitutes for cosmetic procedures. Dr. Brody agrees, "No cream, prescription drug or non-prescription will equal a treatment; they may simply delay a superficial procedure."

AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS

Consider these ideas for doing more with less. If a full set of crowns or veneers is simply not in the budget this year, consider treating tooth discoloration with professional bleaching or bonding, and minor crowding with cosmetic contouring. This may not be your ultimate solution, but it might keep you smiling until the financial worries subside. Dr. David Garber, Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry professor, said it best, "Invest in your smile; it could well be the key to your future."

In his practice, Atlanta plastic surgeon Dr. Codner has seen an increased interest by patients in researching procedures and products. As well, he's seen higher sales of "effective, tried-and-true cosmetic products, those with proven track records." Although such products improve overall appearance, they are not substitutes for cosmetic surgeries.

If a visit to the cosmetics counter at Nordstrom's or Bloomingdale's is unrealistic for your beauty budget, don't despair. A current survey on iVillage.com found that more than 75% of women are changing their beauty and style routine due to the economy. There are countless at-home remedies that may provide effective esthetic results. Many good beauty Web sites and publications offer lots of information on doing more with less.

Remember, you always have options. As dermatologist Dr. Sturm explains, "The clinician needs to help the patient sort out how aggressive the patient wants to be, and, as needed, alternative procedures can be offered." Make sure to discuss your budget constraints with your doctor. Adds Dr. Brody, "If someone has a budget and is an established patient, we can do less-aggressive procedures to bide time." An example is a more superficial



HOW CAN I LOOK MY BEST DURING ECONOMICALLY STRESSFUL TIMES?

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peel instead of a medium peel.

Mitchell Barnes concurs, "We give options on most services. We inquire about how much time and expense a client wants to spend." The idea is to commit to only what one can realistically afford.

If you're planning to be photographed for a wedding, holiday or other special event, there are a number of Web sites and software programs that can enhance your facial appearance and complexion in photographs with simple steps to help improve your appearance, giving you the "Hollywood Look" without movie star prices!

Armed with information and good judgment, you can look good for less. Remember that looking good can help you feel better, even when times are tough.



WITH A LIFELONG INTEREST IN BEAUTY, DR. RONALD GOLDSTEIN CONDUCTS ONGOING RESEARCH ON THE PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS PHENOMENON AND ITS ROLE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PERSONAL SUCCESS. HIS DENTAL PRACTICE WAS THE FIRST TO MOVE BEYOND THE SMILE AND FOCUS ON OVERALL FACIAL HARMONY. HE WRITES EXTENSIVELY FOR BOTH CONSUMERS AND THE DENTAL PROFESSION ON BEAUTY, ESTHETIC DENTISTRY AND RELATED TOPICS. DR. GOLDSTEIN IS THE AUTHOR OF THE 2-VOLUME TEXTBOOK, *ESTHETICS IN DENTISTRY AND CHANGE YOUR SMILE* (8 FOREIGN TRANSLATIONS), WHICH IS THE TOP-SELLING CONSUMER GUIDE TO DENTISTRY FOUND IN THOUSANDS OF DENTISTS' RECEPTION ROOMS AROUND THE WORLD. HE IS ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF *NEW BEAUTY* MAGAZINE AND WRITES FOR IT AS WELL. HIS MULTIDISCIPLINARY PRACTICE IS IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA.