

Dr. John Alspaugh

"I LIKE BEING ABLE TO RESTORE THE HARMONY BETWEEN HOW PEOPLE FEEL AND HOW THEY LOOK"

Growing up in a small North Carolina town, John Alspaugh admired his mother, who was a nurse. Although she never pushed him, Alspaugh became intrigued with medicine as a pathway to help other people. He chose plastic surgery to focus on the positive aspects of medicine.

"I really applaud those courageous physicians who treat cancer," says Alspaugh of Associates in Plastic Surgery in Virginia Beach. "But it takes a lot out of you personally. Plastic surgery is making people even better than they were to start with."

The most common surgeries Alspaugh performs involve the female breast—split among breast enhancements, breast reductions and post-cancer breast reconstructions.

"When women come in for breast augmentations, it's about their self image and the clothes they want to wear," he says. "It's never about pleasing someone else. If we get an inkling that their reason is to please someone else, we discourage them."

As for breast reductions, most of these are health related and often are covered by insurance. As with breast enhancements, a breast reduction often builds self-esteem. More importantly, it takes a load off a woman's back. "The most common thing we hear with breast reductions is, 'I wish I had this done years ago,'" Alspaugh says.

For cancer survivors, "breast reconstruction after cancer helps a woman to feel more whole, more like she felt before the cancer diagnosis."

In addition to breast-related surgeries, Alspaugh performs a variety of other treatments. For example, women who have lost weight or given birth often seek body contouring or liposuction to restore their skin to its previous contours.

The last 15 years have brought many advances in plastic surgery, Alspaugh says, including laser light skin treatments, Botox and improved fillers to smooth out wrinkles. In the past, fillers lasted only six weeks. "I never had any interest in the collagen fillers because they had such a short-lived effect," he

says. "The improved fillers still have limitations, but they will last six months to a year. A few are even rated as permanent."

Some physicians who aren't plastic surgeons perform these minimally invasive procedures, but may not be able to adequately counsel patients about the pros and cons offered by each. At a certain point, a woman may need something more than minimally invasive surgery to meet her goals and a plastic surgeon can outline all the possibilities," he says.

For Alspaugh, the reward at the end of the day may be a more youthful

appearance for one patient ... less back pain for a woman with lighter breasts ... improved self esteem for a woman now filling out her sweaters or who has lost a breast to cancer ... or improved health and self esteem for people whose bodies are both lighter and more contoured thanks to liposuction.

"People tell me they still feel youthful but they think they look like their grandparents," Alspaugh says. "I like being able to restore the harmony between how people feel and how they look."

—Karen Queen



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