



TOO YOUNG FOR

RHINOPLASTY?

SYDNEY ENT AND FACIAL PLASTIC SURGEON **DR WILLIAM MOONEY** DISCUSSES HOW YOUNG IS TOO YOUNG FOR RHINOPLASTY? LIZZY WOOD REPORTS.

Surgery to correct the shape or size of the nose is one of the most common procedures requested in Australia. Commonly performed on men and women, a misshaped nose can also cause distress to younger girls and boys. But at what age is it appropriate to have a rhinoplasty?

According to Sydney ENT and facial plastic surgeon Dr William Mooney, it's important to wait for the patient to stop growing before making plans for nose surgery. 'I often see girls and boys aged around 13 who want to change the shape of their nose,' says Dr Mooney. 'It's difficult, because you can see that they probably will benefit from rhinoplasty in the future, but you have to say no.'

For most girls, 16 is usually the youngest age at which rhinoplasty can be considered, and it's a little later for boys, who tend to continue their growth spurt until age 18. 'When planning a rhinoplasty, it's important to plan a nose that fits the features of the face,' says Dr Mooney. 'You can't do that until the nose has stopped growing. The foundations have got to be static before we can build a structure upon them.'

But regardless of whether a young patient is anatomically ready for rhinoplasty, Dr Mooney believes it is especially important to gauge whether the child is ready psychologically. 'I've got to be really confident that they're ready for the operation mentally,' he says. 'Girls and young women often don't like getting lipstick on their teeth, so the concept of changing their face is a big deal for them. They've got to be mentally stoic and prepared for change.'

Because of the importance of ensuring the patient has both stopped growing and is psychologically strong enough for rhinoplasty, Dr Mooney believes it is important to see young patients on multiple occasions leading up to surgery. Whereas a patient in their 30s or 40s may require up to two

consultations, young patients should be seen over a course of between six and 12 months, during which their growth and emotional state can be assessed by the surgeon.

'I see the patient multiple times. I see them with their parents, and speak to them on their own as well, to get a feel for them being mature enough to go ahead with rhinoplasty,' says Dr Mooney. 'Invariably, even if I think the patient is ready, that their face has stopped growing and that they've stopped growing vertically, I still delay them six to 12 months to be sure that they're OK with the rhinoplasty.'

This also affords Dr Mooney a time frame within which to assess their face. 'You've got to be cognisant of the changes that happen in male and female faces as time goes by, in particular the female face,' he says. 'Young women lose mid-face volume – the puppy fat that appears in the cheeks in the late teens and early 20s. So when I'm planning a nose, it needs to look cute in their 20s, elegant in their 30s and sophisticated in their 40s. I've got to plan a nose that lasts for the rest of their life.'

According to Dr Mooney, the male face also changes during the patient's 20s. 'The change from boy to man is seen as the jaw increases in strength and thickness and so that manliness about the chin and jawline is something the nose has to balance,' he says. It's therefore important to ensure the nose does not appear too petite when this change happens, later in life.

Having rhinoplasty at a young age does have some benefits. Healing takes place much quicker, and therefore the results can be seen much earlier than when the patient is older. A woman in her 30s, for example, can expect to wait up to a year to see the final results of her rhinoplasty, whereas a teenager will see their final result in a matter of months, if not weeks. 'It can be frustrating for a woman in

her late 30s or early 40s because it takes so much longer for them to see results,' says Dr Mooney. 'This is because of the elasticity in the skin. The elasticity in the skin starts to deteriorate in a woman's early 20s.'

Depending on the circumstances of each patient, Dr Mooney will draw on either the open or closed rhinoplasty technique. However, he believes that the open technique can achieve the most satisfying results in the majority of patients, regardless of age. 'Open rhinoplasty achieves the best results in younger patients,' he says. 'You get better control of the tip and that usually means better results.'

According to Dr Mooney, the difference between a 'good' and a 'great' rhinoplasty comes down to meticulous planning. 'We look in detail at the patient's diet and every medication they take, and then we change anything that may increase the likelihood of bleeding or bruising or that

may inhibit healing,' he says. 'Pre-operatively we prescribe Berocca and arnica. For patients at a higher risk of bleeding we might prescribe vitamin K on the day of surgery.'

For all patients, post-care is also vital when it comes to facilitating a successful outcome. As well as using taping and injection techniques to modify anomalies in the nose, Dr Mooney believes massage techniques can improve the results of a rhinoplasty. 'Massage is essential,' he says. 'My patients start massage on the face one week after surgery. This can decrease swelling when performed away from the nose. Two weeks after surgery, we'll start general massage on the nose, and continue for the next month.'

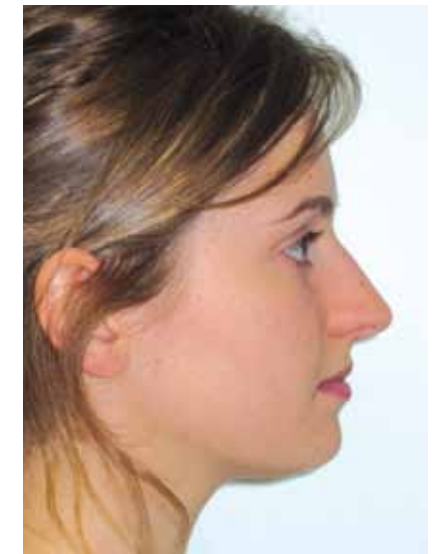
With good preparation, careful patient selection, meticulous surgery and comprehensive post-care, young men and women can enjoy improvements to their nose, without having to wait until later in life. **csbm**



BEFORE



BEFORE



BEFORE



AFTER rhinoplasty by Dr Mooney, with makeup



AFTER rhinoplasty by Dr Mooney, with makeup



AFTER rhinoplasty by Dr Mooney, with makeup

This 18 year old had just finished her HSC when she presented with nasal concerns. Functionally, she had sinusitis which was exacerbated after an upper respiratory tract infection. She also suffered from hyponasal speech. Cosmetically, she was mainly concerned about what she called 'the big bulb' in the middle of her nose. She also had an over projected tip and fullness of her supra tip. Following rhinoplasty and sinus surgery the patient has an excellent functional and cosmetic outcome.