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The Perfect Body - Lining up for surgery to get their shape back

Photo by Gary Yokoyama, the Hamilton Spectator Karen Rosbrook sits among a bank of laser treatment machines.

Nips and tucks for moms 35-50

By Deirdre Healey

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It's Yummy Mummies in their 30s, not their mothers, who are driving up the number of cosmetic surgeries in Canada.

These women have just finished having children and are pining for the body they had when they were in their 20s.

A survey released yesterday by Mediacard Finance Inc. found women between the ages of 35 and 50 make up 72 per cent of today's cosmetic surgery patients in Canada. "These women have had kids and want to get their old bodies back," said Anne Kaplan, president and CEO of Mediacard, which offers financing to persons seeking elective medical procedures.

There has been a surge in the number women in their 30s getting cosmetic procedures at the Institute of Cosmetic and Laser Surgery in Oakville, said Karen Rosbrook, clinic manager. The clinic serves patients from Hamilton, Burlington Oakville and Mississauga. "I know my mom when she was in her 30s and 40s wasn't thinking about wrinkles," Rosbrook said. "But women today are more aware of their bodies. They are going to the gym and staying fit and want to look as young as they feel." To help get their pre-baby figures back, these 30-something women are getting breast augmentations, tummy tucks and liposuction.

The survey found all three procedures have increased in numbers in recent years. However, the biggest growth is happening in non-surgical procedures, especially facelifts. Non-surgical procedures now make up 79 per cent of total procedures happening in Canada, according to the survey.

Women are moving away from the pulling, stitching and snipping of the surgical facelift and instead are opting for injection treatments. **"Injections is one of the hottest cosmetic procedures around," said Dr. Peter Vignjevic, who offers non-surgical procedures at his Hamilton practice. "It's very common for women in their 30s."** These less evasive procedures have also attracted women 19 to 34. That age group makes up 19 per cent of cosmetic patients in Canada.

Rosbrook said there are a growing number of women in their 20s getting non-surgical facelifts because they are viewed as a "preventative measure." "Younger women want to prevent aging from happening," she said. "When you get Injections, you are preventing wrinkles from forming."

Rosbrook is a 44-year-old mother and isn't ashamed to admit she has had several surgical and non-surgical procedures aimed at making her look younger. "I am 44 and I look better than I did when I was 35," she said. "I do it for the same reason I get my nails and

hair done, because I care about what I look like. It makes me feel good." She has had a breast augmentation, gets regular injections and Restylane in her face --two forms of injections that eliminate facial wrinkles -- has had her lips enlarged and had the skin around her belly button tightened with Thermage treatments. Those involve sending radio frequency waves into the skin, encouraging the production of collagen and making the skin firmer.

Many of the non-surgical procedures take minutes and leave little or no bruising or swelling. They can also be done without anyone knowing, Rosbrook said. While more people are getting cosmetic surgery, "there is still a stigma," she said.

Yummy Mummies' growing attraction to cosmetic surgery is partly the result of increased awareness, convenience and availability. But there is also stronger pressure on women in their 30s and younger to erase or prevent the signs of aging, said Marc Ouellette, English and Cultural Studies professor with McMaster University. Some women feel looking younger will help them climb the corporate ladder, he said. Others do it because they want to stay young mentally and physically. "A lot of women in their late 30s and 40s are trying to look like their teenaged daughters," he said. "They don't want to grow up. But age and aging is not negotiable."

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