

DR. MICHAEL HAKIMI

Dr. Michael Hakimi is one of the top Hollywood, CA-based Board Certified plastic surgeons that all the big stars go to and he has been on the forefront of new technologies and services during the pandemic

Dr. Hakimi, tell us a little bit about your area of practice? How long have you been in practice and what made you want to go into that area of medicine?

My Plastic Surgery office is in Beverly Hills. I finished training in 2016 and since then my practice has been exclusively aesthetic surgery of face and body. It was during my surgical rotation in medical school when I decided to pursue plastic surgery. I found it fascinating to be able to restore form and function in individuals. One day you do a facelift, the next day liposuction, another day doing a mommy makeover. The knowledge of anatomy required from head to toe, attention to details, fitness in surgical detail all fed very well into my OCD.

What do you enjoy the most about being a plastic surgeon?

It is very personal and intimate. People come to your office and talk about their insecurities. Then they trust you with their face or body. It is truly a humbling privilege and joy to do what we do every day. The improvements we make go way beyond postoperative changes you see in photos. After the surgery these patients are more social, their energy is very different, the way they walk, their interaction with friends, places they go and photos

they take and post on social media. I would say the way I make them feel is even more fulfilling than the aesthetic improvement I make in their appearance.

How are your offices different from other clinics? What are its differential points?

In my surgical practice, I do the majority of procedures under local anesthesia or what they call "awake surgery." Not going under general anesthesia makes for a faster recovery, and no anesthesia complications. People that come to me are mostly type A personalities, people that like to have control over their environment and don't want to undergo general anesthesia. These are people that would have gone to freeze their fat only to avoid anesthesia knowing that the result is never as impressive as liposuction. They come in one day, have their liposuction done and they will be back to work in a few days and to the gym without any restrictions in two weeks.

The "Med Spa" portion of my practice is probably the most unconventional. It is an on demand botox and fillers service where you go online and book a nurse to come to your house, work or hotel to give you your botox, fillers or IV therapy. Why take a few hours off your day to go to an office for your Botox? Why not get it tonight when you are home after work? You had a fun weekend and need that IV therapy to get you ready for Monday? Now they are all available to you online (www.WIVOHEALTH.com) and you can get them 24/7 at your house, hotel or at work. All patients are

"Why take a few hours off your day to go to an office for your Botox? Why not get it tonight when you are home after work? You had a fun weekend and need that IV therapy to get you ready for Monday? Now they are all available to you online."

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"I think people get caught up in numbers too much. They pay some online bot to get them tons of followers so they look 'more legit (...)' I use social media to educate people (...) and that in my opinion is the key to growth."

“ My ultimate dream is to make **WIVOHEALTH.COM** a national household name, to make *IV therapy, botox & fillers* available to whoever, whenever & wherever.”

interviewed by me via a HIPAA compliant video conferencing system and the treatments are rendered by nurses that I personally pick from the best in the industry.

What are the most popular treatments for both women and men at the moment? Has the COVID pandemic changed the demand from your patient base?

Liposuction. The gyms were closed for over a year, people were sitting at home, not working out, stress eating, and not even had to leave to go to work. Now that things are looking better and people are getting some level of normalcy back they want to look their best. They want to travel, see their friends and family, take photos and share them on social media. And no diet works fast enough. Of course, liposuction is not a weight loss method. It is meant for people that already are on a good diet and exercise regimen and it is meant to help remove fat from unwanted areas. But let's face it, in this day and age we want immediate gratification, most dramatic results in the shortest time with the least amount of work. In my practice I perform the majority of liposuctions under local anesthesia. So it is a very casual procedure for my patients: No need for general anesthesia, much less risk to their health and much easier recovery. These patients get off the operating room table and walk to their ride to take them home. Feeling achy for a couple of days and are back at the gym by no later than 2 weeks after the surgery.

COVID has certainly boosted some surgeries: Facelift for the more mature patients and liposuction of the neck to remove double chin and buccal fat removal in the younger patients. Psycholog-

ically, when you talk to someone at a conversational distance your eyes are less likely to notice "flaws" or criticize someone's, or your own for that matter, face because you are also interacting with that person and are distracted by his / her presence. That is why we notice "imperfections" much easier in photos and videos. Now on top of this, you add odd camera angles and bad lighting we have when on Zoom or other online meetings, you can see why people are increasingly asking for facial rejuvenation procedures such as facelift, necklift, neck lipo or skin tightening with radiofrequency technology.

Also, most patients after facial rejuvenation surgeries (facelift, neck lipo, etc) are fully independent and barely need any pain medications. These procedures' recovery is mostly a "social downtime" due to swelling and bruising. And that is now easily covered under the mask. So not only have we seen an increase in patients undergoing these procedures but they also are getting out of their houses faster because they can cover up the mild swelling and bruising under the mask.

Many people worry about not being too natural-looking. How can you guarantee that this won't happen?

Answering this question can take a book chapter with each page explaining the fitness in natural results in each surgery. If you want to look natural the first and best indicator is to look at your surgeon's photos. Do the facelift results look "natural" to you? Are the liposuction results "too extreme" or do they look like a thinner, more fit version of themselves? These are assessments that each patient can make on their own. The other important thing to look for whether your surgeon is certi-



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fied by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. It means that your surgeon has done specific training in plastic surgery for at least five years after medical school and is held by the highest standards in the industry. These plastic surgeons have gone through very rigorous training and in order to maintain their board certification have to perform surgeries in very regulated and safe environments and continue to provide that level of service. This is as opposed to other titles that would allow physicians trained in other fields such as internal or emergency medicine for example to perform cosmetic procedures after taking a brief course. That is not to say that board certification in plastic surgery gives you any insight into the surgeon's artistic ability. But it is the minimum you can look for to be assured of the safety, knowledge and technical ability of the surgeon.

What are the preliminary steps before surgery? If you are thinking about having any plastic surgery procedures first you have to choose your surgeon. I tell my patients to see between 3 to 5 surgeons. You can either pick them from looking on social media, or even better from friends and family who have had any procedures or call the American Society of Plastic Surgeons to help you find someone in your area. Then you go for a consultation where you get to meet your doctor, ask all your questions and he or she would be able to tell you if you are a good candidate for the surgery. Think of this as you and the doctor interviewing each other. It usually takes close to an hour, and you usually leave the consultation with a quote for the cost of the surgery

and scheduling options. You may decide to see a few plastic surgeons and compare the cost, your experience and their results before making your final decision.

When you pick your surgeon, you talk to their coordinator to pick a surgery date that works for both of you. He or she will then tell you if there are any labs or medical clearance needed prior to the surgery. You will visit your surgeon one more time for a preoperative visit where he or she gets to review your lab results and go over the final surgical plan with you.

What about the psychological approach you have with your patients?

Very often people sit in the consultation room and ask me "what do I need?" and I always give them the same answer: "Nobody NEEDS plastic surgery. You tell me what bothers you or what improvements you want to see, then I will tell you what your options are, why and how I can help." These days people are bombarded by different surgical or nonsurgical options to alter their face or body to have certain looks. This can cause anxiety and feeling of inadequacy which can lead to a lot of side effects in one's personal and professional life. Moreover, the amount of information out there and the need for one to vet these claims before making their decision is exhausting. That is why unlike my generation that was told "knowledge is power," this generation prefers access to someone they can trust to vet the information for them. You can see why the boom in social media influencers right?

As plastic surgeons, I think we are obligated to educate our patients not just about the risks and benefits of the procedures we do but also the alternatives even if we don't offer them. That would alleviate some of the anxiety or the feeling of being overwhelmed by the patient.

When it comes to social networks, what marketing strategy have you adopted?

I've been very fortunate in that regard as most of my patients are word of mouth referrals. I would say 90% of my facelift patients are referred by my previous patients. This group is in no rush, usually more mature and sophisticated patients. They take their time researching the surgeons and their previous patients and don't just google or look up someone on the internet in my opinion. The other 10 percent of my facelift patients and majority of my body patients, especially Awake Liposuction, are from my social media both Instagram and TikTok. This group is usually younger, most of their research is done on social media platforms and really seek social validation before making their decisions. That means they value your online reviews, your work on different platforms and sometimes even your online persona. Unlike many of my friends, I don't have 100K or even in some cases millions of followers. The few thousands that I have, are real people with real interest in plastic surgery or science of beauty or just have a healthy level of curiosity. They DM me their questions and I answer them and make those available to the public for others who might have the same questions.