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## Despite Risks, Adults Not Shying Away from Cosmetic Surgery and Other Treatments

*One in 10 adults who had cosmetic or other procedures reported complications*

*Of those who underwent such treatments, nine percent said they were "very concerned" about the potential risks or complications*

In an era of rising out-of-pocket costs for healthcare, a small but slightly increasing minority of U.S. adults are opting for expensive invasive cosmetic treatments that are not always covered by medical insurance, according to the results of a new Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll. Similar numbers of adults say they have had invasive (7%) and non-invasive (8%) cosmetic surgery or other treatments and many of these procedures, regardless of their invasiveness, appear to be elective rather than medically necessary. The poll also shows that while the percentage of adults who have undergone cosmetic surgery or other treatments remains relatively small, directionally, those who have undergone a treatment are slightly more likely now than two years ago to report experiencing problems that required follow-up.

These are some of the results of the online survey of 2,066 U.S. adults conducted by Harris Interactive between January 23 and 25, 2006 for the Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

### Is there a doctor in the house?

Majorities of those who have undergone a non-invasive treatment said they had their procedure(s) performed by a medical doctor with a medical degree or another medical professional. Laser treatments appear to be the exception to this rule. While two in five adults who had laser treatment say the procedure was performed by a medical doctor (22%) or another medical professional (17%), 61 percent say the procedure was performed by a technician, an increase of 25 percentage points from 2004.<sup>1</sup>

### Elective vs. medically necessary procedures

With the exception of bariatric surgery, majorities of those who have undergone invasive cosmetic surgery or other treatments say their procedure was elective rather than medically necessary. While a majority (54%) of those who had bariatric surgery said it was medically necessary, elective bariatric surgery doubled in popularity within the past two years, from 23 to 46 percent.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the opposite can be said for liposuction. Electively, it fell from 96 to 81 percent, yet medically necessary liposuction increased from four to 19 percent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

<sup>2</sup> Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

<sup>3</sup> Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

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## Treatment concerns

While a majority of those who have undergone any cosmetic treatment or other procedure say they were not very (26%) or not at all (37%) concerned prior to the treatment about the potential risks or complications, 33 percent say they were somewhat concerned and nine percent say they were very concerned. These percentages increase substantially for those who have undergone an invasive procedure (47% somewhat concerned, 17% very concerned). These concerns appear to be somewhat warranted as one in 10 (10%) report experiencing medical problems that required follow-up as a result of any cosmetic surgery or other treatment they received, up slightly from seven percent in 2004.

The poll also reveals concerns about treatments that are conducted by technicians. More than half of adults who have never had cosmetic surgery or other treatments say they would be somewhat (24%) or very (32%) concerned about receiving such treatments from someone other than a medically trained doctor.

**TABLE 1**

### Experience with Cosmetic and Other Treatments

"Which of the following types of cosmetic surgery and other treatments, if any, have you yourself ever had..."

Base: All Adults

	2004	2006
	%	%
<b>Non-invasive treatments (Net)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>
Teeth whitening, bonding or other cosmetic dental work	9	7
Facial skin resurfacing treatments such as chemical peels, laser abrasion or other treatments	1	1
Laser treatments for veins, hair removal, etc.	1	1
Injections for wrinkles (such as collagen or Botox)	1	*
<b>Invasive treatments (Net)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
Lasik surgery for your eyes	2	3
Cosmetic surgery of any kind (such as face lift, chin implant, tummy tuck, nose job, etc.)	2	3
Bariatric surgery for weight loss (where the size of your stomach is surgically reduced)	*	1
Liposuction	*	*
Hair transplant	N/A	*
None of these	84	86
Decline to answer	1	1

Note: Multiple-response question.

\*Less than 0.5%.

N/A = not asked

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**TABLE 2A**

**Who is Providing Non-Invasive Treatments**

"Think about the [NON-INVASIVE TREATMENT] that you've had. To the best of your knowledge, was/were the procedures performed by a medical doctor with a medical degree, some other kind of medical professional, or by a technician?"

Base: Had non-invasive treatment (variable base)

		2006			
		Treatment Provided by:			
		Medical Doctor	Other Medical Professional	Technician	Not Sure
Teeth whitening, bonding or other cosmetic dental work	%	46	31	9	15
Injections for wrinkles*	%	83	17	-	-
Laser treatments*	%	22	17	61	-
Facial skin resurfacing treatments*	%	56	-	43	1

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

\*Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

**TABLE 2B**

**Trends in Treatments by Technicians**

"To the best of your knowledge, was/were the procedures performed by a medical doctor with a medical degree, some other kind of medical professional, or by a technician?"

*Percent saying "Technician"*

Base: Had non-invasive treatment (variable base)

	Treatment Provided by: Technician	
	2004	2006
	%	%
Teeth whitening, bonding or other cosmetic dental work	14	9
Injections for wrinkles*	-	-
Laser treatments*	36	61
Facial skin resurfacing treatments*	39	43

\* Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

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**TABLE 3**

**Elective vs. Medically Necessary Invasive Treatments**

“Was/Were the [INVASIVE TREATMENT] you received medically necessary, or was it an elective procedure?”

Base: Had invasive treatment (variable base)

		Procedure was:			
		Elective		Medically Necessary	
		2004	2006	2004	2006
Cosmetic surgery*	%	57	61	43	39
Liposuction*	%	96	81	4	19
Lasik surgery*	%	92	88	8	12
Bariatric surgery*	%	23	46	77	54

\* Very small base. Data should be used directionally.

**TABLE 4**

**Concerns About Complications**

“Before receiving any of these treatments or procedures, how concerned were you about potential risks or complications?”

Base: Had cosmetic surgery and/or other treatments

	2006		
	All	Had Invasive Treatments	Had Non-Invasive Treatments
	%	%	%
Very concerned	9	17	4
Somewhat concerned	33	47	22
Not very concerned	31	30	31
Not at all concerned	27	6	43

**TABLE 5**

**Experience with Medical Problems**

“Have you had any medical problems that required follow-up as a result of any of the cosmetic surgery or other treatments that you received?”

Base: Had cosmetic surgery and/or other treatments

	2004	2006		
	All	All	Had Invasive Treatments	Had Non-Invasive Treatments
	%	%	%	%
Yes, experienced problems	7	10	17	7
No, did not	93	90	83	93

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**TABLE 6**

**Confidence/Concern Receiving Treatments from Trained Technicians**

“How would you feel about receiving cosmetic treatments like cosmetic dental work, injections for wrinkles (such as collagen or Botox), laser treatments for veins or hair removal, or facial skin resurfacing treatments such as chemical peels or laser abrasion from a trained technician rather than a medically trained doctor?”

Base: Have not had cosmetic surgery and/or other treatments

	2006
	%
Very confident	3
Somewhat confident	9
Neither confident nor concerned	17
Somewhat concerned	24
Very concerned	32

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_wsj.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp).

**Methodology:**

This poll was conducted online in the United States between January 23 and 25, 2006 among a nationwide cross section of 2,066 adults aged 18 and over, of whom 332 have had cosmetic surgery and/or other treatments. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online. In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the various sub-samples is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample was not a probability sample.

*These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

**About the Survey**

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at [www.wsj.com/health](http://www.wsj.com/health).

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In 2005, the Online Journal was awarded a Codie Award for Best Online News Service for the second consecutive year, and its Health Industry Edition was awarded Best Online Science or Technology Service for the third consecutive year. In 2004, the Online Journal received an Eppy Award for Best Internet Business Service over 1 million monthly visitors.

The Wall Street Journal Online network includes CareerJournal.com, OpinionJournal.com, StartupJournal.com, RealEstateJournal.com and CollegeJournal.com.

## About Harris Interactive

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