

# Natural Wellness

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## Healthier patients for better results: a reachable goal

**P**lastic surgery is about optimizing: helping people realize their personal best. This requires a good starting point. We all know that happy, healthy people with isolated issues are the most satisfied customers in our practices. On the other side our biggest disappointments occur, often in spite of our best intentions, when we select our patients unwisely.

I feel it is important to look at a patient in terms of total well-being, not just "a body part" requiring correction. My role as physician is to take into account all aspects of an individual's physical and emotional health. Plastic surgery is more than nipping and tucking; it's about a person's overall quality of life. I want all my patients to feel good about themselves before, during, and after my surgical interaction with them. I want them taking a vital role in their own wellness.

My career in plastic surgery and my interests in nutrition and history have led to certain observations and conclusions regarding the state of our current "wellness." Indeed, my experience affects how I educate my patients.

We, as a people, have been on this planet for a very long time. We have evolved slowly, but successfully from a genetic standpoint. In fact our genetic code is almost identical to that of our prehistoric ancestors.

We are internally programmed for survival. What has changed is our culture. We have raced far ahead of our own biology with the agricultural, industrial, and information revolutions. Our progress has in many ways slowed us down. We now have diseases of culture, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. All of this makes for unhealthy people and high-risk surgical candidates.

Today, so many are on a quest for health and beauty through quick fixes, evidenced by the enormous commercial popularity of diet books, diet pills, miracle exer-

cise programs, and even "weekend" and "lunchtime" surgery. If we look back through our history our future direction is clear.

Since the advent of civilization, 100,000 generations of genetically evolving hunter-gatherers have clashed with 500 generations of agriculturists, 10 generations of industrialists and one generation of informationists.

In the clash between cultural revolution and biologic evolution, the brain has overpowered the body. The mind is in a quandary about what is happening to the body. We overanalyze why we are not in good shape. Are we eating too much fat? Not enough protein? Too many carbohydrates? We are deluged with so many options that we cannot decide how to achieve maximum well-being. Despite more information about diet and exercise than ever before, more people are becoming obese and diseased than ever before. There is a mind-body disconnect that must be addressed.

### Learning From the Past

Our ancestors worked hard. They were nomads, taking with them only what they needed. They ate what was naturally available: grasses, lean meat, and fish. They evolved without processed foods—they did not require supplements! Simply put, our ancestors lived to survive; and survive they did. In fact if environmental factors did not kill them they lived to respectable ages. There was an instinctual balance between nutrition and exercise. It is with this model that I have adapted my own "instinctual wellness" program for my patients.

The modern equivalent of our Paleolithic predecessors would be a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, abundant in water and rounded out with lean meat and

fish. Processed foods, refined grains, and dairy would be avoided.

Exercise should be both aerobic and strength building. This is common sense without the hype of Atkins, the Zone, South Beach, or Suzanne Somers. A fundamentally sound diet and basic exercise can make patients happier and better surgical candidates.

Beauty starts from the inside, and feeling good makes it easier to take the steps to looking good. It is all about empowerment, taking control and making progressive decisions.

I tell all my patients, "I am an architect of the human body. A good foundation is necessary for a beautiful building." Surgery is not always the quick-fix solution. Certainly, a misshapen nose or breasts that are too big or too small are out of anyone's control, except the plastic surgeon. However, many patients need a sound nutrition and exercise program to optimize their health and view of themselves. This can minimize and may even eliminate some types of surgery.

### The Plan

**Nutrition:** Forget about the food pyramid—pyramids are tombs for failed civilizations. Think about a wheel of progress, or a food wheel. The rim is water (6–8 glasses per day), the spokes are fruits and vegetables (6–9 per day), the hub is protein (lean meat, chicken, and fish), and the axle

