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BY NANCY McVICAR

It's not a gift you can wrap up neatly for Hanukkah or Christmas, but done right, you can give that special someone a gift of beauty this holiday season.

Giving the gift of a facelift, breast enhancement, rhinoplasty or a less invasive procedure such as Botox has become fairly commonplace, but there are many caveats.

"I think it's a very nice gift for Christmas or any holiday to give a loved one, but it has to be very thoughtfully done. It should not be something that forces them to do something they don't want to do," says Dr. Shashi Kusuma, a board-certified plastic surgeon who practices in Miami and Plantation.

"For surgeries, it should be something that has been discussed," Kusuma says. "If she and her husband agree they want to learn more about it, then the best thing is to make an appointment for a consultation with a board-certified physician because there are people out there who are not properly trained. It would be great if the two of them come in together, learn what it would entail, if they are a good candidate, and whether the financing would work out for them, because this is not something you can just open on Christmas day."

Giving such a gift is not a new idea. In a survey of 100 plastic surgeons done five years ago by the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 49 percent of them said they had patients who received a cosmetic procedure as a gift, up from 31 percent in 2001.

But Dr. Ryan Greene, a board-certified plastic surgeon who practices in Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton, does not recommend giving plastic surgery as a gift as a general rule.

"One inherent problem is that it doesn't start with the physician-patient relationship," Greene says, and not everyone who wants a face lift or certain other procedures is a good candidate. "This is very serious medicine, and ultimately everything is about maintaining the safety of the patient."

"Surgery is really a much more personal thing for the patient, and it shouldn't be seen as buying some goods," Greene says. "The only exception is if a teenage patient wants to have a rhinoplasty, and if the parents want to come in with the child."

Dr. Jacob D. Steiger, Delray Beach, a board-certified plastic surgeon who specializes in facial plastic surgery and non-surgical facial rejuvenation procedures, says in the right circumstance, such a gift can be appropriate.

But he cautions, "There has to be some tact. It has to be for someone who has talked about it in the past. I did recently have a husband who came in with his wife and offered [a procedure] for her 60th birthday because she had talked about wanting to do it, and she was very excited about this."

Steiger's practice has had daughters offer Botox to their mothers and a mother offer it to her daughter for her wedding, and a man who had a necklift was so happy with the results he offered the same procedure to his brother.

"Plastic surgery has become a lot less taboo," Steiger says. "People want to look their best. Maybe they've had a procedure and like how it looks and want their family and friends to have the same benefits, so they want to give it as a gift."

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