

# Growing number of women going under the knife

## Why local plastic surgery cases are on the rise

By Amanda Van Slyke



*\*Names have been changed*

**Growing up female in our society isn't easy.** From the television and Internet advertisements that tell us what we should be buying, to the posters and billboards that tell us what we should be, any night owl will know that we can't get away from this pressure even when we're vegging out on the couch before bed.

These late-night advertisements promote workout systems and weight loss programs that become embedded in our heads while we try to get some shut-eye. The not-so-hidden messages warn us that in order to be considered valuable we need to ensure we fit into society's mold of what's deemed attractive. It all looks like a trap to keep women preoccupied with never-ending self-improvement so that they don't spend more time on – oh I don't know – world issues.

Large breasts are seen everywhere in windows of lingerie stores sporting push-up bras that almost always look better on the models photographed in the display. While some women may be blessed with thirty-two waists and double-ds, the majority of women are left feeling inadequate as they look down at what mother-nature gave them.

It's no surprise then that with the normalcy of plastic surgery throughout the years that not only middle-aged women who want to reverse gravity are dishing out the big bucks – but women in their early twenties are spending tens of thousands of dollars in the hopes of achieving some grapple of confidence. And while it's all good if these women are actually boosting their self-esteem through surgery, are they actually happier post-surgery?

While breast augmentation is something that's casually mentioned in cities revolving around the entertainment business such as Los Angeles or Vancouver, many people would be surprised to know that Edmonton is building its own reputation in terms of a growing number of women who are willing to go under the knife for their dream bodies.

Dr. Feng Chong, a surgeon at Plastic Surgery Alberta says that during the week, their office will see about fifteen to twenty-five clients who come in interested in breast augmentation. Some of these women are interested in both breast implants and a mastopexy (breast lift) at the same time.

I spoke to twenty-three-year-old *\*Anna* who, after years of hating her natural-born breasts, finally woke up to what she always wanted this winter. An everyday Edmontonian who works full time to pay rent, bills, car insurance and to support her two dogs and two cats happily paid the tab of around \$10,000 after a consultation with a surgeon. Anna says that she completely stands by her decision to change her body. "I was very unhappy with my natural breasts," she says. "I would never let sexual part-

ners touch or see them. I felt like I had something wrong with me. I felt masculine. After years of waiting for them to appear on their own, I finally took the leap and it was the best decision of my life."

"The recurring sentiment I hear from many women is that this is a life changing surgery; their self esteem, confidence and happiness are all increased," says Dr. Chong. "This is the case even in women who do this for themselves and go with very conservatively sized implants (meaning many times others many not even know they have had surgery)."

"As well we often hear that women wished they had done this earlier and not waited so long."

Anna emphasises that the surgery was simple – she went to 'sleep' and woke up with a new set. However, she says that she had concerns starting out.

*"I was scared I would go too big, or they wouldn't be nice enough for my standards," she says. "I had a picture in my head of what I thought I wanted, and I only hoped they would meet that expectation."*

For those worrying about the surgery itself, Dr. Chong says that the pain is probably less than most women anticipate. "However, we do inject long lasting local anesthetic in the area during surgery," he says. "As well, we prescribe pain medications afterwards. These two measures help with pain control."

# 100 Days of Running

By Dakota Barber

On the day of the surgery, Anna had a massive panic attack in the recovery room.

"I couldn't actually take a real peek at them until the next day," she says. "At that point I would've been horrified – the first view of new breasts is not what one would expect. They look awful for a couple weeks. Luckily I knew what to expect, and overcame my worries."

"The majority of women are very happy and excited [post-op], says Dr. Chong. "Post operative, many are surprised at how little pain there is. Many of the clients will describe that it is similar to the discomfort they have after a very difficult chest workout. In fact many women simply get tired of 'taking it easy' and are keen to get back to regular life and exercise."

So what advice does Anna have to Edmontonian women who are interested in breast implants?

"It's critical to make sure you're comfortable with your surgeon," she says. "Shop around, read reviews and listen to them, go for multiple consultations with different surgeons. Hold out for one who gives you a good gut feeling and your chemistry is good with."

With so many women having breast augmentation done, one wonders if any of them regret the experience.

"I've been doing this for over seven years now," says Dr. Chong, "and we are one of the busiest offices in Canada. Up until this year I did not have anyone come back wishing they did not have the surgery. This year I had one client come back. Although she was very happy, she stated that her fiancée didn't like them so she wanted them removed. I think a factor for her as well, was that she had gained some weight causing them to be larger than they were previously. She is our very first patient who wanted them removed."

So will this trend lead women towards society's trap of never-ending self-improvement?

"I would say well over 90% of women are very happy [with their results], says Dr. Chong. "One interesting point, however, is that although I always warn clients about this, many do come back wishing they had picked a larger size."

"I would've gone a little bit bigger as well," says Anna.

The sports facilities, the sense of community and the incredible opportunities for people of all ages are just some of the things Iryna Synychak, an immigrant from the Ukraine, loves about life in Edmonton.

Iryna identifies as a mother, journalist, public speaker and human rights activist and although it's an impressive roster, Iryna knew she something was missing in the months leading up to the Fall of 2013.

"I got off track with my lifestyle. I put on weight and had a lot of emotional baggage that I had to deal with."

After years in a troublesome marriage, followed by the struggles of being a single mother, Iryna was tired, frustrated and ready to make a change both physically and emotionally.

"I had to do some radical changes. You have to take responsibility for your own lifestyle."

Inspired to get back to the athlete she had been since first grade, Iryna decided to challenge herself to run two to three kilometers every day for 100 consecutive days, all the while spreading love around the city.

"Love is the answer for so much turmoil and trouble in the world, so I wanted to combine these two things and see where it would take me!"

From October to January, she ran every day regardless of the time, how negative the temperature was or how tired she felt from working two jobs.

"The thing for me was to just do it, and I can see how it transformed me and how it made me so much stronger."

By the time she finished her hundredth day Iryna was feeling accomplished, and ready to encourage others to be better. While the exercise was beneficial, completing her running goal had even bigger effects on Iryna personally.

"I know I can inspire others to reach their goals and reach their full potential!"

Her book, 100+ Day Love & Running Challenge is set to come out in the fall of 2014 with 50 per cent of the proceeds being split between two charities very close to Iryna's heart - WIN House, an Edmonton shelter for women and children fleeing family violence as well as ACT Alberta, an



organization of which Iryna volunteers as a Community Educator, dedicated to ending human trafficking in Alberta.

"When I found out how real the problem is here, I was so shocked. I wanted to be involved."

While Iryna still has her first book to finish, she is already dreaming of all the other things she hopes to accomplish in the future including life coaching, launching her own web series and, of course, a 42km run in Edmonton this summer.

**For more on Iryna's story visit [mychallengeblog.com](http://mychallengeblog.com)**

## Elli Looker is the Winner

of the round of Golf for 2 People

with power Golf Cart

**at Twin Willows Golf Club**

from the May/June Golf Contest

