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FREQUENT FLIER

Memo From Surgeon: Office Hours Don't Include Midflight

By DR. AMIYA PRASAD

IN my years as a cosmetic surgeon I have found that people will go to great lengths to achieve a certain ideal of beauty or masculinity.

I travel about once a month throughout the [United States](#) or overseas for meetings or to lecture. I enjoy people and generally find myself chatting with seatmates. But once a seatmate finds out what I do for a living, I have had some strange encounters.

In a medical office setting, there are specific protocols that are followed. We don't talk about patients in the hallways, and everything is designed to keep a person's reason for a visit private.

But on a plane all bets are off. Modesty takes a leap out the window. And no one really cares about privacy. Not only will very attractive people tell me every single thing they don't like about their looks, sometimes they will try to show me those body parts that for modesty's sake — and airline rules — really should remain within the confines of clothing.

On a recent flight to [Los Angeles](#), the takeoff was delayed, and I passed the time chatting with a gentleman seated next to me.

Since we weren't going anywhere soon I left my seat to stretch my legs and to use the restroom. As I was making my way down the aisle, I recognized a woman seated behind me. She is a local television reporter and I see her face all the time on the local news.

Anyway, this woman stood up as well and started following me. As we approached the facilities, I offered to let her go first. But she wasn't budging. Instead, she started talking to me about surgery.

She said she had overheard my conversation with my seatmate and was thinking of having "something done." She wanted to know if I could go into the stall with her so she could undress, and then get my opinion about that body part she didn't like.

I politely but quickly declined, explaining that it would be inappropriate. I did give her my card and told her to call me. She is now a patient.

It's not only women who reveal their dissatisfaction with their bodies. Men aren't immune from chatting me up. But it is interesting to see how they approach me. Where women are very open about their perceived problems, men ease into the subject. Their favorite subject: hair transplantation.

On a recent trip a man asked me if my hair was real. I had just removed a [ski](#) cap and my hair was looking very full because of static. Despite telling the fellow my hair was homegrown, we wound up talking about hair transplants and other options.

A few men have asked about liposuction and chin implants. And a few brave men have asked me about penile extensions. Once I explain that surgery, however, most men are so horrified, they rarely follow up with an office visit.

I'm not going to lie about what I do for a living. I think doctors have a responsibility to help people where and when they can. But at 30,000 feet, there are limitations. So please keep body parts covered until you get to the office. At the end of the flight, you, me, my insurer and our fellow passengers will be a lot more comfortable.

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