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Cosmetic surgery advertising rules in the UK

Cosmetic surgery has stricter marketing rules than most of medicine. This guide summarises what surgeons and clinics must and must not do.

What the GMC requires

The GMC guidance for doctors who offer cosmetic interventions says that marketing must be responsible. It must not trivialise the risks of a procedure, and it must not claim that a procedure is free of risk.

Doctors must not offer their services as a prize. They must not use promotional tactics in ways that could encourage someone to make an ill-considered decision.

What the advertising code requires

- Claims must be truthful and supported by evidence
- Adverts for cosmetic interventions must not be directed at under-18s
- Adverts must not exploit insecurities about appearance
- Before and after images must be genuine and must not mislead
- Prescription-only medicines must not be advertised to the public

Offers and finance

Time-limited discounts and two-for-one deals conflict with the GMC guidance because they put pressure on the patient. Clear standard pricing is safer and attracts better-informed patients.

A sensible approach

Explain suitability, risks, recovery and realistic results on every procedure page. Give patients time to reflect after the consultation. Show your qualifications and registration clearly.

Related pages

- Marketing for cosmetic surgeons
- Marketing for plastic surgeons

Common questions

Can cosmetic surgeons advertise on social media?

Yes. The same rules apply on social media as elsewhere, including the rules on targeting, evidence and prescription-only medicines.

Can I run a competition to win a cosmetic procedure?

No. GMC guidance says doctors must not provide their services as a prize.

Checklist

- ☐ Every procedure page explains risks and recovery
- ☐ We do not run time-limited offers or prize draws
- ☐ Our adverts are not directed at under-18s
- ☐ Before and after images are consented and unedited
- ☐ Patients are given time to reflect before booking surgery

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