



HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

Cosmetic Surgeries Rise in South Korea During Pandemic

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South Korean demand for **cosmetic surgery** operations sharply increased in 2020.

Last year, the industry in South Korea was worth about \$10.7 billion dollars. That was an increase of around nine percent from 2019. South Koreans are expected to spend around \$11.8 billion this year, says Gangnam Unni, the country's largest online cosmetic surgery website.

Ryu Han-na is a 20-year-old university student. She got an operation on her nose in December.

Ryu took her classes online throughout 2020. She said the abilities to rest at home and to wear a face covering in public were important for her.

"I always wanted to get a nose job...I thought it would be the best to get it now before people start taking off masks when vaccines become available in 2021," she said as she prepared for the operation, which cost around \$4,000.

"There will be **bruises** and **swelling** from the surgery but since we'll all be wearing **masks** I think that should help," she added.

That thinking is leading to an increased demand for such operations in South Korea. Gangnam Unni data showed its users grew to about 2.6 million last year, an increase of 63 percent from a year earlier.

However, the pandemic made it nearly impossible to sell cosmetic services to foreign patients. As a result, the industry has tried to promote its services more to people in the country and nearby.

Promote means to make something more popular or well-known.

Cosmetic surgeons say patients are interested in operations on all parts of the face. Some want operations on parts of the face that are easily hidden under coverings, such as the nose and lips. But others want operations in places that face coverings do not hide.

Park Cheol-woo is a surgeon at WooAhIn Plastic Surgery Clinic. Park was responsible for Ryu's operation.

“Both surgical and non-surgical **inquiries** about eyes, eyebrows, nose bridge and **foreheads** - the only visible parts - certainly increased,” Park said.

Surgeon Shin Sang-ho runs Krismas Plastic Surgery Clinic. Shin said many people have spent their emergency payment from the government at hospitals and surgical centers.

“I felt like it's sort of a **revenge** spending. I've sensed that **customers** were expressing their pent-up emotions (from the coronavirus) by getting cosmetic **procedures**,” Shin said.

Pent-up emotions are feelings that have been held back or not expressed.

Government data shows that of about \$13 billion in government payments, 10.6 percent was used in hospitals and drug stores. That was the third-largest area of spending behind supermarkets and restaurants. However, details of spending at hospitals were not provided.

A third wave of coronavirus remains a concern in South Korea as the country reports more daily cases. “We've seen growing numbers of cancellations...recently as people **refrain** more from going outside...” Park said.

I'm John Russell.

Joori Roh reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

cosmetic – *adj.* used or done in order to improve a person's appearance

surgery – *n.* medical treatment in which a doctor cuts into someone's body in order to repair or remove something

bruise – *n.* a dark and painful area on your skin that is caused by an injury

swelling -- *n.* an area on someone's body that is larger than normal because of an illness or injury

mask – *n.* a covering for your face or for part of your face:

inquiry – *n.* a request for information

forehead – *n.* the part of the face above the eyes

refrain – *v.* to stop yourself from doing something that you want to do

revenge – *n.* the act of getting back at someone or something that has wronged you

customer – *n.* a person who buys goods or services from a business

procedure – *n.* a medical treatment or operation
