



Mott Poll Report

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Teens Too Young for Non-Surgical Cosmetic Procedures?

Non-surgical cosmetic procedures (e.g., laser hair removal, chemical skin peels, teeth whitening, dermal fillers) are intended to enhance appearance without the risks of surgery. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of children 13-17 years old about their opinions on non-surgical cosmetic procedures.

Overall, 39% of parents say they know someone who has had a non-surgical cosmetic procedure, including teeth whitening or veneers (24%), hair removal (24%), fillers (15%), or laser skin treatment (11%). However, few parents say their teen girl (7%) or teen boy (1%) has asked about non-surgical cosmetic procedures. In describing their beliefs about non-surgical cosmetic procedures, 51% of parents say teens should be allowed to get them only for valid reasons, 31% think teens should be prohibited from them under any circumstances, and 18% believe teens should be allowed to get them for any reason, as long as they have parental approval. Parents state that the minimum age to get a non-surgical cosmetic procedure should be older than 18 years (35%), 18 years (21%), 16-17 years (27%), or 15 or younger (17%).

Parents vary in their view of different reasons teens may want to get non-surgical cosmetic procedures, showing the most support for the parent thinking the procedure may improve the teen's mental health (37% valid, 38% not valid, 25% unsure), the teen wanting to look good for a special occasion (33% valid, 54% not valid, 13% unsure), the teen being self-conscious about their appearance (33% valid, 50% not valid, 17% unsure) or being bullied due to their appearance (30% valid, 47% not valid, 23% unsure). Parents show less support for teens getting procedures because their career goals depend on appearance (21% valid, 61% not valid, 18% unsure) or they want to look like people on social media (8% valid, 85% not valid, 7% unsure).

If their own teen asked to get a non-surgical cosmetic procedure, factors parents say would be *very important* to their decision are health and safety ratings of the provider or procedure (76%), advice/approval from child's healthcare provider (57%), and their teen's reason for wanting the procedure (55%). Parents say their concerns would include feeling that their teen doesn't need the procedure (64%) or may have future regrets about it (57%), that requesting the procedure may be a sign of mental health/self-esteem problems (55%), the cost (52%), their teen will want to continue getting procedures (49%), and infection or scarring (44%).

Parent views on the minimum age for non-surgical cosmetic procedures

>18 years	18 years	16-17 years	≤15 years
35%	21%	27%	17%



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2025

Report Highlights

1 in 6 parents think teens should be allowed to get non-surgical cosmetic procedures for any reason if they have parental approval.

Half of parents say being bullied about appearance is not a valid reason for teens to get a non-surgical cosmetic procedure.

1 in 14 parents say their teen girl has asked about getting a non-surgical cosmetic procedure.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in August 2024 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 1-17 years living in their household (n=2,010). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 67% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 989 parents with at least one child age 13-17. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±1 to 3 percentage points.

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Implications

Non-surgical cosmetic procedures have grown in popularity and are increasingly available. For teens who may be self-conscious about issues such as acne scarring, discolored teeth or noticeable facial hair (for girls), these procedures offer the opportunity to address their concerns. However, as they are not performed for medical reasons, but purely to change appearance, parents varied in their opinion of the age at which youth should be able to obtain such services, with the more than half selecting 18 years of age or older.

Parents in this Mott Poll were also conflicted about the circumstances under which non-surgical cosmetic procedures are appropriate for teens. About half of parents thought teens should be able to get non-surgical cosmetic procedures if there was a valid reason, but there was little agreement around what reasons are valid. Even for mental health or bullying – situations typically recognized as important – less than forty percent of parents felt it would be a valid reason for non-surgical cosmetic procedures. Moreover, similar proportions of parents rated the validity of teens wanting to look good for a special occasion on par with wanting the procedures due to mental health or bullying.

It's possible that parents understand that non-surgical cosmetic procedures may not improve a teen's mental health. Certainly, if a teen asks about getting a cosmetic procedure, parents should explore the teen's expectations of how the procedure will change their appearance and their perceptions of how it will impact other aspects of their life. Some teens may view these procedures as a quick fix that will help them become more popular or gain friends, but as these outcomes are not guaranteed, parents can talk with teens about the potential risks of a friendship based solely on their appearance and discuss different options for making new friends. If mental health needs are noted, working with a counselor or therapist may be helpful.

Thorough research into risks and benefits is essential when considering whether to seek cosmetic procedures, including consultation with a healthcare professional. Parents and teens should be aware of the health-related implications of cosmetic procedures, as non-surgical does not mean risk-free. Some procedures have a risk of scarring, burning, discoloration, or infection. In addition, they should be aware that results may vary based on the expertise and experience of their provider. Whether the services are obtained within a medical setting (e.g., a dermatology or plastic surgery office) or at a salon or spa, ensuring the provider is appropriately qualified and licensed is an important first step. In addition, parents and teens should look at the provider's health and safety ratings and patient reviews. Recognizing that procedures do not always go as planned, parents and teens should explore how the provider handles situations when outcomes are not optimal.

Another factor to consider when thinking about non-surgical cosmetic procedures is cost. While non-surgical treatments are generally more affordable than surgical options, they typically offer temporary results, meaning that teens may need repeated treatments to keep the desired effects. Common procedures like hair removal often require multiple sessions over time, and the cumulative costs may be substantial.

The vast majority of parents in this Poll thought that wanting to look like people on social media was not a valid reason for teens undergoing non-surgical cosmetic procedures. However, the increased popularity of these procedures is likely associated with social media content that exposes teens to idealized images of faces and bodies. Teens are susceptible to feeling insecure about their appearance when compared to digitally altered pictures depicting an appearance that is unattainable naturally. This problem is exacerbated by the pressure to post pictures of themselves on social media to garner positive feedback and validation, but which presents the risk of negative critiques. Finding ways to help teens understand the distortions presented in the media and the importance of their intrinsic value due to all the things that make them who they are, not just their appearance, may help teens push back against the pressure to conform to social media norms.