

Increasing Concern Over the Cost of Facial Cosmetic Dermatological Procedures Since the Onset of COVID-19

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INTRODUCTION

Cosmetic procedures have increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The ASDS reports a nearly 63% increase in facial cosmetic surgeries between 2020 and 2021, with a steady increase in the following years.^{1,2} The increased demand for cosmetic care seems to be correlated with substantial increases in pricing, particularly among non-invasive cosmetic dermatological procedures. Between 2025 and 2030, there is an expected increase in the cost of 10.3% for non-invasive cosmetic procedures such as injectable filler.³ However, no studies to date have explored consumer interest in the cost of various cosmetic procedures since the onset of COVID-19. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate interest in the cost of common cosmetic dermatology procedures since March of 2020.

Google Trends was used to explore interest in the cost of common cosmetic dermatological procedures. This platform normalizes search terms to a scale from 0 to 100, which represents the range of interest on a given topic.⁴ This database does not provide exact measurements of search terms but rather tracks trends based on how often a term is searched in the Google engine. No identifying information was collected in this analysis. Data were collected from March 1st, 2020, to March 1st, 2024. The term "cost" followed by various cosmetic dermatological procedures (Table 1) was queried on Google Trends. Searches classified in "Web" and "all search categories" were included in the analysis.

Search terms for the cost of platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections (243%) and microneedling (162%) had significant increases since March of 2020. Interest in the cost of filler (136%) also increased drastically over this time period, with lip (189%), cheek (115%), and facial filler (146%) being the most common search terms. While interest in the cost of nearly all other cosmetic procedures increased during this time period, search terms for CoolSculpting® and microdermabrasion cost decreased by 20% and 13%, respectively (Table 1). The average percent change for the cost of all cosmetic dermatological procedures was an overall increase of 10% since March 2020.

TABLE 1.

Interest in the Cost of Cosmetic Dermatological Procedures Between March 1st, 2020 and March 1st, 2024.

Procedure	March 2020	March 2024	Percent Change (%)
PRP injection	28	96	+ 243
Lip filler	27	78	+ 189
Microneedling	34	89	+ 162
Facial filler	28	69	+ 146
Filler	38	90	+ 136
Cheek filler	33	71	+115
Hair transplant	34	68	+ 100
Botox	44	86	+ 95.4
Jawline filler	56	73	+ 30.4
Laser hair removal	41	52	+ 26.8
Liposuction	39	48	+ 23.1
Liposuction	41	50	+ 21.9
Chemical peel	51	58	+ 13.7
Sclerotherapy	22	25	+ 13.6
Microdermabrasion	16	14	- 12.5
Coolsculpting	25	20	- 20

Values representing the popularity of search terms for each procedure were normalized on a scale of 0 to 100 via Google Trends. These values do not represent the actual number of searches for each term, but rather the relative popularity of the search term at various points in time. A score of 100 represents the peak interest in a particular search term, while 0 represents the lowest point of interest. PRP; platelet-rich plasma.

The drastic increase in search terms for PRP injections, microneedling, and facial fillers suggests that concerns over the cost of facial cosmetic procedures have drastically increased since the onset of COVID-19. These findings may be due to what has been termed in social media as the "Zoom-Boom effect".⁵ As more individuals transitioned to online virtual workspaces such as Zoom during the pandemic, interest in enhancing facial aesthetics began to increase.^{2,3} Additionally, the transition away from wearing masks in public spaces may have contributed to increased interest in pursuing facial augmentation, such as lip and cheek fillers, which began to rise substantially as

seen in the present study. The increasing number of searches associated with cost may therefore be correlated with an overall increase in the pursuit of facial cosmetic procedures. In the context of rapidly changing prices of facial cosmetic care, the increased search terms for cost may be explained by reactions to fluctuating prices in the cosmetic industry. Given the financial hardships that many individuals experienced in recent years, it is important for providers to consider how these rising prices have impacted peoples' decision-making process in their pursuit of cosmetic care. Furthermore, as interest in pursuing facial cosmetic procedures continues to rise, it is important for dermatologists to ask about cost concerns during clinical encounters for cosmetic procedures, particularly injectable fillers and PRP treatments.

DISCLOSURES

The authors have no financial conflicts of interest to disclose.

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