

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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## Toronto mummies need a lift

**T**wo years ago, when her baby was a year old, Barbara, who is 34 and lives in Richmond Hill, had a cosmetic body tune-up. A former model and personal trainer, she was no stranger to what she calls "people measuring your value by your physical appearance." She had been previously "blessed with a decent pair," and was shocked to gain 80 pounds during her fist pregnancy. When she stopped breastfeeding, she went "from pornographic to National Geographic. And they didn't even point in the same direction any more."

"Now the top of my cup is full."

Barbara is part of a wave of young women in Toronto who are turning to the knife to take back their pre-baby figures. Privately funded procedures are not tracked by the government. But, says Ann Kaplan, who is the founder of the New You cosmetic-enhancement and anti-aging consumer show, Toronto has become the sixth-largest market for elective plastic surgery in North America.

According to her private study, procedures (including the non-surgical arsenal of injectables and laser treatments) have gone up 35 per cent each year since 1995, and patients are starting their retooling younger. The comfort level with expensive intervention has increased proportionally, so surgery no longer seems as extreme an option.

One of the largest growth area is postpartum women. This generation of health, beauty and fitness consumers comes to the surgeon's office in buff shape. They are already yummy mummies, just looking for a little lift, tuck and contouring to modify the bits ravaged by childbirth.

"I wanted to look the way I used to," Barbara says. "I wanted to look good for my age."

As celebrities such as Sarah Jessica Parker appear on magazine covers seemingly min-



utes after giving birth, the stakes are raised for normal women. "What everyone forgets," says Trevor Born, one of the city's most hyped surgeons and a social-page regular, "is that these stars have trainers and dieticians and chefs, and it is part of their job to be at the gym for three hours a day." They are also genetically "unique and gifted individuals," he adds.

For most women, keeping up with the Parkers requires a little intervention. Plastic surgeons are the new gurus and have become suave masters of public relations. They enjoy profiles in print media. They display their fleshly miracles on talk shows. They have egos larger than those of architects, though that hardly seems possible. Among the 500 or so accredited Canadian plastic surgeons

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**Celebrity moms such as Sarah Jessica Parker put pressure on regular women to regain their pre-baby shape.**

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(half of whom do cosmetic work), a few have emerged as the “body guys” to the young mothers of the city looking to be restored to their former glory.

“People have money. In economic downturns, they tend to focus on themselves, investing in home modifications and cosmetic makeovers,” says Dr. Born. His is the name of girlfriends whisper to each other for breast work.

“This has been our best year ever,” agrees Dr. Steven Mulholland, himself no stranger to the limelight as a regular on CITY-TV’s Cityline.

The physical effects of childbearing sound even worse in clinical terms. “Women come in and say, ‘My breasts went away with the breast feeding,’” Dr. Born says. “They’ve lost volume and reasonable shape. It’s called ptosis, or hanging or sagging. Ptosis sounds better.”

Dr. Mulholland has the patter down to get women running for extreme help. He begins by discussing how postpartum women are looking to restore a “sense of femininity and a sense of proportion after being slave to their uterus for a decade.” He rises to a climax with “jiggly, gelatinous, wrinkly, rolls, yucky, gucky, a constellation of body derangement.” Before he starts carving, he said, the “upper breast is a pancake. Like a rock in the bottom of a sock.”

“After the hormonal changes of pregnancy and childbirth and breast-feeding, women are seeing fat they can’t get rid of,” adds Dr. Frank Beninger, a star at the publicity-prone Beresford Clinic. “No matter how much they work out, they can’t get back what they’ve lost to breast-feeding.”

Breast lifts start from about \$5,000 but cosmetic surgery is not unlike the automotive industry: There are always add-ons and after-

market detailing that takes the price up. Procedures are also available in “bundles”: A boob-and-tummy package runs about \$20,000.

The women who are having these procedures report a variety of positive effects, ranging from an increased sense of energy and self esteem to the not inconsequential thrill of fitting into sexier clothes. Nancy, who lives in Yorkville, is a yoga teacher who had “perfect breasts” before she had babies. She really loves her revamped breasts. “It’s fun now to be able to wear a strapless bustier to a film-festival party.”

Cosmetic surgeons find that postpartum patients are often the most satisfied. “I’m back to the way I was when I was 20,” says Donna from Thornhill. “My girlfriends call me Perky.”

In the great cultural tradition of naming body parts, she says, “I now call what I had my ‘old boobs.’ They were indented, hanging so low. Now I look down, and they’re right there. I can even wear a bikini again.”

Still, there remains a hesitancy about trumpeting the news that you’ve had work done. Despite the sense that there is a new openness to cosmetic surgery, backed up by the boom in procedures; it’s still a secret luxury. (No one interviewed for this article wanted their real name used.)

Whether or not they choose restoration work after a pregnancy, some feel damned either way: “There is a disdain if you don’t lose the weight after having a baby,” Barbara says. “But you also feel judgment for appearing to lose the weight too easily.”

Nancy, the Yorkville yoga teacher, doesn’t care if anyone thinks she’s vain. “It was money well spent,” she says. “But I understand it’s a real luxury.”