

Frequently Asked Questions:

1) How do I get a consult? What is the process? When will it be approved?

To get a consult, you must have your physician (PCP or TRIWEST approved provider) enter a computer generated consult through CHCS. The consult is then reviewed by one of our surgeons within 72 hours of the consult being submitted. Information needed to expedite the processing of your consult includes your current height & weight, you or your spouse's PRD/EAOS, any history of cancer, and your social history (smoke & alcohol use). You can call the Consult Manager (619) 532-6950 to find out the status of your consult. Your consult can be accepted, denied, or disengaged. If your consult is accepted, the Consult Manager will contact to set up your appointment. If you have been disengaged, your consult is automatically forwarded to Utilization Management so that you can seek care in the civilian sector. TRIWEST will send you a letter in the mail in 4-6 weeks to let you know whether your consult to be seen by an outside provider is approved or not. Not all requests are approved.

2) Is there a waiting list for consults?

There is no waiting list for consults.

3) Who can be seen in the Plastic Surgery clinic?

Active members, retirees, and dependents can be seen in the clinic. Occasionally, we have to limit the number of persons that can be seen. You can call 619-532-6950 to determine if you can be seen in our clinic.

4) During the initial consultation visit, what can I expect? Is my surgery going to be done by a resident or an intern?

A staff surgeon will examine you and discuss the best plan of care for optimal results. Not all requests require surgical intervention. You will not have surgery on your first visit. Surgery planning takes time and coordination. Your surgery will be performed by a Plastic Surgeon although a resident or intern may assist.

5) Can I have surgery if I am a smoker?

Smoking does not allow for proper wound healing and elective surgery will not be performed if you are actively smoking. The clinic performs nicotine testing on patients who are smokers to assure that they have quit for at least 6 weeks prior to scheduled elective surgery. A positive nicotine test will result in rescheduling or cancelling of an elective procedure.

6) How much does the surgery cost? Who determines if I pay for surgery or not? I had an old quote for my surgery, but now it is more. Why the change?

The surgeon determines if a procedure is deemed cosmetic or therapeutic according to the guidelines set forth by TRIWEST. Surgery costs vary according to the type of procedure, anesthesia fees, and other associated facilities costs. BUMED fees change annually. Neither NMCSO nor the Plastic Surgery Clinic has control over the costs of surgical procedures.

- 7) **Can I have surgery while I am in town from deployment or on TAD orders? My PRD/EAOS is coming up. How soon can I have surgery? I am overseas. What do I need to do to get seen? Can I get TAD orders for my surgery?**

Surgery takes coordination with the availability of OR time and the surgeon. Typically, from the time you have the initial consultative visit to the actual operation can take up to 2 months. You will also need at minimum 2- 3 months of follow up visits. It is best to be stationed stateside, in the San Diego vicinity, during the duration of your treatment. TAD orders are not being issued for Plastic Surgical procedures unless medically indicated.

- 8) **Do I get one free surgery if I am Active Duty?**

No. In 2006, BUMED mandated that any cosmetic procedure would have associated costs. This pertains to all Active Duty, Retirees, and their beneficiaries.

- 9) **I recently had a baby and am currently breastfeeding. How soon can I have surgery?**

Women who breastfeed and are requesting breast surgery must wait until 9 months after you stop breastfeeding. If you did not breastfeed, you must wait 6 months post-partum.

- 10) **I had surgery done by a civilian provider. Can I get it corrected in this hospital?**

It is best for you to go back to the surgeon that performed your original surgery. That surgeon is responsible for the continuity of your care. If you have left the area in which you had your original surgery or have extenuating circumstances you are welcome to have your primary care provider submit a consult. If the consult is deemed cosmetic, there will be associated costs. If the consult is approved, you will have the opportunity to be seen here. If the consult is deemed cosmetic and denied, then you will need to seek care in the civilian sector at your own expense.

- 11) **I am on Active Duty but I want to have elective cosmetic surgery on the outside. What do I do?**

An Active Duty member who desires surgery in the civilian sector must obtain a counseling entry on the SF 601 or Page 13 for Non-Emergency Medical Care without Prior Approval Form from the member's Medical Department according to BUMEDINST 6320.72.

- 12) **My surgeon has been deployed. What happens now? My surgery was paid for and scheduled, but was cancelled. What happens now?**

At this point, you can either wait to be seen by your surgeon upon his/her return or you can be reassigned to another surgeon but you will start to consultative process over. If you have paid for your surgery, a copy of your paid receipt is kept on file in your medical record. Either you can have your money refunded to you (takes up to 8 weeks) or you can wait until a surgery date is available.

- 13) **I live in another state but my stated residence is in the San Diego area. What can I expect to happen?**

It is optimal to reside within the San Diego for continuity of care. Should a complication arise, it is best to be near your surgeon. For therapeutic cases, you can be disengaged to a surgeon closer to

your residence. For cosmetic procedures, you will likely need to find a local provider and the care will be at your own expense.

14) I had gastric bypass surgery. Isn't post-weight loss body contouring covered? I was told that it was.

Not all procedures are covered. TRIWEST covers those procedures deemed therapeutic. Your surgeon will inform you if your procedure is therapeutic or cosmetic. The majority of body contouring operations after massive weight loss are deemed cosmetic and have associated costs if your consult is accepted.

15) I lost a lot of weight to join the military. My recruiter and/or command told me that I could get free surgery to approve my appearance in uniform for promotions etc. Is this true?

NO. NO. NO. Congratulations on your sustained weight loss and improved health! Active duty members who have lost weight through diet and exercise in order to join the military do not get free body contouring surgery. Please have your primary care provider submit a consult. It will be evaluated according to our clinic policies. The overwhelming majority of these cases are deemed cosmetic and there are costs associated.

16) What happens if I miss my assigned appointment?

If you miss your scheduled appointment and have called to let us know – you will be given the opportunity to reschedule. If you do not come to your initial consultation and do not provide notice ahead of time – your consult will be closed and you will need to see your primary care provider to submit another consult.

17) Why do I need to have Medical Photographs taken?

Medical Photographs must be taken before a procedure to best plan for your operation. In addition, it helps to visualize pre- and post- procedural results. Failure to get pre-operative photographs taken will result in your surgery being rescheduled or cancelled.

18) After surgery, can I go out of state or a reasonable distance?

You must ask your surgeon when it is safe to travel or drive again.