few procedures are more popular than rhinoplasty—aka, the nose job—and few require greater skill from a trained cosmetic surgeon.

WORDS J.P. Faber PHOTOGRAPHY Tommy Chung
The nose. It takes center stage on the face, and it’s no wonder, then, that it inspires all kinds of cosmetic issues:

- Nasal Bump
- Bulbous Tip
- Too Wide
- Too Narrow
- Overprojected
- Underprojected
- Nasal Fracture
- Twisted Nose
- Droopy Nose
- Upturned Nose

Some of these we’re born with and others are the result of a traumatic experience.

“Rhinoplasty,” says top Washington, D.C., cosmetic surgeon Steven Hopping, MD, “is probably the most dramatic procedure you can do on the face, especially with a young woman who has inherited her father’s nose. It’s life-altering.”

Dr. Hopping knows better than most. He has performed more than 2,000 rhinoplasties (nose jobs) in his career, and has served many of the notable congressional families along the way. But being in the nation’s capital gives him no monopoly on the simplest of insights into beauty: that the nose occupies center stage on the face, and that nothing mars your appearance more than a misshapen or disproportionate one.

“I think that my patients appreciate the fact that I do not supply the standard, upturned, Anglo cookie cutter nose,” says cosmetic surgeon Anna Petropoulos, MD, who practices in suburban Boston. “The fact that I have a Mediterranean background helps me preserve someone’s ethnicity while giving them an attractive nose.”

Dr. Petropoulos, who is Greek by birth, is expert in “Italian, Greek and Jewish noses, typically large noses with humps or bulbous tips,” she says. While she also does some “very fine Anglo Saxon noses,” Dr. Petropoulos works meticulously to create an attractive nose that is perfectly in keeping with the patient’s background and bearing. “It not only has to match their demeanor and personality but their ethnicity and overall appearance,” she says.

Compare this to the famous ‘Diamond’ nose of the 1970s, named after Dr. Howard Diamond of Manhattan, a plastic
Noses come in all shapes and sizes. There is no ‘right’ one for every face. (Clockwise from upper left: Cate Blanchett; Javier Bardem; Adrien Brody; Oprah Winfrey)
surgeon who gained fame for making the operation more predictable—as well as more standardized. In those days, every Jewish girl in the New York metro area wanted a Diamond nose. “Long Island in the ’70s was a place where a nose job was all too commonplace and Dr. Diamond was the surgeon of choice,” says Gayle Kirshenbaum in her documentary project My Nose. “A Diamond nose was recognizable by signature nuances, a flare there, and an upturn here.” Even 40 years later, a Diamond nose can still be recognized.

How different that is from today, with its emphasis on natural appearance and harmony with the individual’s facial characteristics. “My client population is primarily Caucasian, but with a strong Mexican, or Latin, component,” says Dr. Schmid. “One of the challenges is retaining the ethnic characteristics, not to create an Americanized nose, but an attractive Latin American or ethnic type.”

THE REPAIR JOB
Probably the toughest challenge a cosmetic surgeon faces with rhinoplasty is revision or secondary rhinoplasty reconstruction—repairing work done by an inexperienced plastic surgeon, or by one who has acquiesced to a patient’s wish to take too much away.

“About 30 percent of people who come to me for rhinoplasty are coming to have it redone,” says cosmetic surgeon Dr. Curtis Schalit, who performs the procedure about 40 times a year in his Daytona Beach, Fla.-based practice. “These are people who have had too much of the nose taken away... [sometimes] the supporting structures are gone, and they are one operation from a total collapse. That’s what happened with Michael Jackson—somebody went too far.”

In order not to go too far, Dr. Schalit, like Drs. Hopping, Petropoulos and Schmid, spends considerable time with patients to understand—and visualize—what the patient wants, and to determine if it’s possible. “Most people bring in pictures of people,” he says. “I had one patient who brought in a picture of Ashley Simpson. She [my patient] had a similar nose, so it was something we could achieve.”

Listening to what the patients want to accomplish, these and other cosmetic surgeons frequently use computer-generated design programs to illustrate the outcome.
“My process is always the same,” says Michael Will, MD, president of the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery, who practices in suburban Maryland. “I always ask the patients what brings them in, what concerns they have, and what they like or don’t like about their nose. We stand in the front of the mirror and talk about it. Then we sit in front of the computer and do some morphing, to see whether we are addressing those concerns.”

PATIENT PERSPECTIVE
This was the case with Ashley Apparito, a patient of Dr. Schmid’s who had broken her nose as a child and who, as a teenager, wanted the bump it created to be removed. She also had trouble breathing as a result of the childhood accident.

Ashley followed her initial consultation with computer imaging sessions with Dr. Schmid, who altered photographs of her nose to show the shape of things to come.

While most rhinoplasty operations take two hours or less, Ashley’s took more than four hours because of bone damage her accident had caused. And like most patients, Ashley had to undergo a few initial days of discomfort during her recovery.

“I would say that the second day [after the operation] was the worst,” says Ashley, an 18-year-old college student. “My swelling and bruising was a lot worse. My brother came up with the nickname ‘blow fish’ for me, because my cheeks were so swollen.”

Ashley’s discomfort, however, soon gave way to ecstasy. “Once I got the cast off it was amazing,” she says, and as time passed the swelling reduced and her nose became progressively smaller. Within a few months the nose also regained feeling (it had been a little numb at the tip) and softness. “Now I’m in love with the nose. I just love it… [My doctor] did a wonderful job. I would recommend it to anyone.”

For Gillian Mafeo, a patient of Dr. Petropoulos, recovery was much less difficult.

“I know that people always say, you should love yourself for who you are, but this boosted my confidence. I feel on top of the world. I feel beautiful.”

—Gillian Mafeo, a patient of Dr. Anna Petropoulos, Boston, Mass.

After a closed rhinoplasty to address a dorsal hump, she was out of the hospital the next day. Although groggy from anesthetics, took only Extra Strength Tylenol for the pain. “I had no bruising and no swelling,” she says. “I had a cast on my nose, a solid one [which] came off after about a week and a half.” What Gillian saw so impressed the Boston-based public relations agent that she posted a picture of herself on Facebook. “I got a hundred comments,” she says.

“I know that people always say, you should love yourself for who you are,” she says. “But this boosted my confidence. I feel on top of the world. I feel beautiful.” Gillian was working for one of the country’s largest ad agencies when she got her procedure. Since then she has started her own PR firm.

Other patients report similar ease of recovery. Merlene Garner, a 66-year-old patient of Dr. Schalit’s who underwent a “closed” procedure, says she was surprised at how little trauma she endured. “It was amazing how little discomfort there was, it was so minimal,” she says. “It was an outpatient surgery experience. I came home shortly after I was brought into the recovery room.” Merlene says that when the dressing came off, she had some bruising under the eyes, “but it goes away rather quickly. I looked much worse than I felt.”

Most cosmetic surgeons will tell their patients that recovery can take up to a full year, though most of the changes will be apparent fairly early on.

“There is a very high degree of patient satisfaction because it’s immediate,” says Dr. Will. “The results are concealed for a short time [by bandaging, etc.]—perhaps a week on average—then they immediately see that the bulbous nose has been reduced, or the hump removed. It’s a very rewarding procedure for the surgeon and patient alike.”

But you don’t need to tell that to the patients of experienced cosmetic surgeons.

“I am obsessed with my nose,” says Gillian. “Every time I look in the mirror I think, ‘That’s flawless. I absolutely love it.’”