

Aesthetic medicine: a public health issue that requires stricter regulation¹

**Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine
5 June 2026**

Aesthetic medicine encompasses non-therapeutic medical procedures designed to alter or enhance physical appearance. It primarily concerns the face and body and involves techniques of varying degrees of invasiveness, such as injections, the use of lasers, or certain tissue-remodeling procedures. It is distinct from cosmetic surgery, as well as from non-medical beauty treatments carried out by beauty therapists.

Although performed solely for aesthetic reasons, these procedures carry risks that can sometimes be serious, yet are all too often overlooked or downplayed by the public: infections, skin necrosis, cerebrovascular accidents, eye damage, or long-term functional and aesthetic complications (1).

Driven by the influence of social media, unrealistic beauty standards and the increasing normalization of procedures, cosmetic medicine is expanding rapidly, particularly among young adults and those who are psychologically vulnerable (2). This trend is taking place within a framework that remains insufficiently structured, characterized by a lack of standardization in training, the unequal quality of practice, inadequate oversight and the dissemination of incomplete, biased or misleading information (2,3).

At the same time, the development of illegal practices carried out by unqualified individuals poses a major health risk. Invasive procedures are thus being offered outside any regulatory framework, without recognized training and with no traceability of the products used, exposing patients to serious complications that sometimes require specialist hospital care (3)

¹ Press release of the Academy's Rapid Communication Platform.

Given that aesthetic medicine cannot be regarded as merely a cosmetic procedure devoid of health implications, the French National Academy of Medicine advocates strengthening the regulatory framework governing the sector to ensure patient safety and the quality of practice. It recommends:

- To clearly define, in legal terms, the scope of aesthetic medicine based on the invasiveness of procedures, the nature of the products used and the risks associated with them.
- To restrict all invasive procedures to duly qualified healthcare professionals who have completed specific training in aesthetic medicine and who undertake to keep their knowledge up to date on a regular basis.
- To strengthen inspection and enforcement measures against illegal practices, non-compliant premises and misleading advertising, by ensuring better coordination between health authorities, professional bodies and the courts.
- To require, prior to any cosmetic medical procedure, a mandatory preliminary medical consultation aimed at assessing the appropriateness of the request, providing the patient with honest information on the expected benefits, alternatives, risks and limitations of the proposed procedures, and identifying any potential psychological vulnerabilities or body image issues.
- To strictly regulate communication and promotion relating to cosmetic medicine, particularly on social media, by prohibiting misleading messages, the trivialisation of invasive procedures, aggressive financial incentives and unrealistic representations of results.

The French National Academy of Medicine reiterates that patient safety, high standards of practice and adherence to ethical principles must take precedence over commercial considerations in the field of aesthetic medicine and calls on the public authorities to introduce the necessary regulatory changes without delay.

References

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