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Debra Thomas, R.N., gives instructions to Michael and Marsha Gavula, after the Evans City couple received treatments at the Skin Center Medical Spa in Wexford.

NIP/TUCK partners:

More couples are getting plastic surgery together

Most popular surgeries

Most common plastic surgery procedures in 2010, number of operations

For women

- **Breast augmentation:** 318,123
- **Lipoplasty (Liposuction):** 251,834
- **Breast reduction:** 138,152
- **Abdominoplasty (Tummy tuck):** 137,925
- **Blepharoplasty (cosmetic eyelid surgery):** 131,448

For men

- **Lipoplasty (Liposuction):** 37,183
- **Rhinoplasty:** 30,099
- **Blepharoplasty (cosmetic eyelid surgery):** 20,675
- **Gynecomastia (male breast reduction surgery):** 18,256
- **Otoplasty (ear reshaping):** 10,849

Source: American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery

BY CHRIS RAMIREZ,
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Marsha and Mike Gavula do everything together.

Three, sometimes four times a week, they're side by side at the gym, encouraging each other to squeeze out just one more rep.

Photo albums also chronicle times when they swam within an arm's length of one another through twisted coral caverns off the Florida Keys and the Virgin Islands.

Togetherness for the Evans City couple turned a page last week as they strode into a plastic surgeon's office in Wexford. That was the day they went under the needle together.

Physicians say calls from patients requesting plastic surgery have surged after



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Debra Thomas, R.N., injects Botox into the forehead of Michael Gavula at the Skin Center Medical Spa in Wexford.

two years of industry softness left by the recession. They've also noticed another trend: more couples, like the Gavulas, are getting work done together.

Continued on reverse

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Debra Thomas, R.N., injects a filler above the cheekbone of Marsha Gavula at the Skin Center Medical Spa in Wexford.

“People are living longer, working longer and want to look as good as they feel,” says Dr. Leo R. McCafferty, president of the Allegheny County Medical Society and vice president of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. McCafferty also runs a private plastic surgery practice in Shadyside.

“Most people think ‘This is an investment in myself. I’m healthy, I take care of myself, I exercise. I don’t want to look tired and old because it don’t feel tired and old,’” he says.

Gone are the days when plastic surgery was stigmatized as the ultimate show of vanity, particularly among men.

Americans spent nearly \$10.7 billion on 18 million cosmetic surgical and nonsurgical procedures in 2010, or a 9 percent increase from the year before, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. While women account for eight in every 10 plastic surgery patients, requests by men for Botox injections, liposuction, rhinoplasty and other procedures jumped during that same period, and 88 percent from 1997 to 2010, the group reports.

The Skin Center Medical Spa, which runs three offices in the Pittsburgh area, now performs cosmetic surgery and minimally invasive procedures for nearly 30 couples a year, compared with about six couples just five years ago.

It was at the Skin Center’s Wexford office where the Gavulas met with nurse Debra Thomas and underwent half-hour procedures.

Marsha Gavula, 50, has undergone chemical peels, dermabrasions and other minimally invasive procedures in the past, but says she didn’t pressure her husband to consider plastic surgery.

Mike Gavula says he’s thinner than when he played football years ago for Ohio State, but lifts free weights, plays pickup basketball games and runs about two to three miles on a treadmill to maintain his lean, muscular physique. He decided to get his first Botox and wrinkle-filling injections last week on his 50th birthday.

“My face just seemed to be getting older than my body,” says Mike Gavula, a civil engineer. “There’s only so much you can do yourself.”

His cheeks were the trouble spot. Wrinkles had begun to form on them, which is natural for someone his age.

Gavula, his eyes closed, doesn’t flinch as Thomas gently plunges a needle just below the roundish part of his cheek and injects him with a wrinkle-filler solution. Within moments, the lines appear to have been

erased. Thomas massages the area with her hand to help spread the solution, but Gavula will have to do this on his own for about three days.

“Better!” he exclaims, staring into a hand-held mirror.

Some men in their 50s who lost their jobs during the recession also have turned to plastic surgery to give them a more vibrant look to compete with a more-youthful workforce, Thomas said.

Couples that share decision-making in the home, rather than splitting household responsibilities, generally are more apt to getting plastic surgery done within days of one another, McCafferty says.

Medical advancements in recent years have dramatically reduced recovery times after surgeries, making couples less leery of putting off some procedures, McCafferty says. An advantage may be convenience -- spouses can schedule their procedures within days of each other and can care for their loved one until it’s their turn.

“Getting older is a good thing, but I don’t want to look old,” Marsha Gavula says. “I still want to keep a youthful look for as long as I can.”



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