

BeautyNews

Holding Michelle Obama responsible for the increasing popularity of the upper arm lift procedure might seem a little incredible, but read on for the lowdown in *GHT*'s section on the latest beauty updates.

Call to Arms

Apart from her well-crafted keynote address at the National Democratic Convention during the 2008 presidential election campaign, what got the public tuning into the outfit Michelle Obama chose to wear for the occasion. That pink-and-blue brocade Tracy Reese dress with its last sliver more than just stunning, its lack of sleeves showcased for well-toned arms, signaling the first lady's belief in the importance of health and fitness. Often the front woman when it comes to arm envy, Obama was immediately fawned by publications from Vanity Fair to the *Los Angeles Times* as the inspiration for the increase in brachioplasty procedures after the release of a new report by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS).

According to the ASPS's 2012 Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, the number of brachioplasty or upper arm lift procedures has increased by more than 4,473 percent since the year 2000. The annual report offered comprehensive and comparative data on cosmetic surgery, minimally invasive cosmetic procedures and reconstructive surgery.

Upper arm lifts address the problem of flabby arms, otherwise known as bingo or bat wings. This is usually a concern for those who have undergone extreme weight loss resulting in loose underarm skin. It involves removing the excess skin, and it can take two to three hours, with the patient under general anaesthesia or sedation. The healing period is about two weeks, and the incision at the back of the arm leaves a visible scar. However, there are ways to mitigate the scarring, according to Dr. Tan Ying Chien, Consultant Plastic Surgeon at The Sloane Clinic Plastic Surgery Centre in Singapore.

"At The Sloane Clinic, our post-op patients get the option of undergoing scar improvement therapy using V-beam lasers to reduce redness, and Fraxel lasers to smooth any textural irregularities. Proper post-operative care, such as the use of silicone tape and lasers, can help to improve the scar significantly. Because of this, scarring is not a significant concern for our patients," says Dr. Tan.



"On the other hand, the largest group of people who come for brachioplasty are those who have experienced significant weight loss and are more than happy to risk an obvious scar rather than living with excess, flabby skin," Dr. Tan continues.

The number of upper arm lifts performed in 2012, which is nearly on a par with the breast augmentation that drew 286,000 people to cosmetic surgery clinics last year, making it the most-popular surgical procedure. Moreover, that astounding 4,473 percent increase in the past 12 years looks more modest when you consider that the number of patients who underwent upper arm lifts rose by just 3 percent from 2011 to 2012. But perhaps Obama was unwittingly responsible for that 3 percent. Business Insider reports that she "physically wanted to model a similar look from 2000 to 2008."

Even if she has brought bat arms to the forefront, the procedure isn't for everyone. "Brachioplasty is perhaps not advisable for people who do not scar well, for instance those who are prone to developing keloids," cautions Dr. Tan.



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