



Medical Board
Ahpra

Visual examples of cosmetic surgery advertising

Context

New *Guidelines for medical practitioners who advertise cosmetic surgery* (guidelines) apply from 1 July 2023. An advance copy is available on the [Medical Board's website](#).

These [changes](#) were announced on 3 April 2023.

Ahpra and the Medical Board of Australia have developed these visual examples and [frequently asked questions](#) to help practitioners comply with the new guidelines.

These examples do not represent all of the requirements and should be read in conjunction with the guidelines.

The guidelines have been developed to address the unique features of cosmetic surgery that are not present in many other areas of medical practice and the specific risks involved with cosmetic surgery advertising.

Cosmetic surgery is invasive with the potential for complications, is often irreversible and is often sought by potentially vulnerable people.¹ It can also be a lucrative area of practice and financial gain can compete with and sometimes outweigh patient wellbeing and safety considerations.

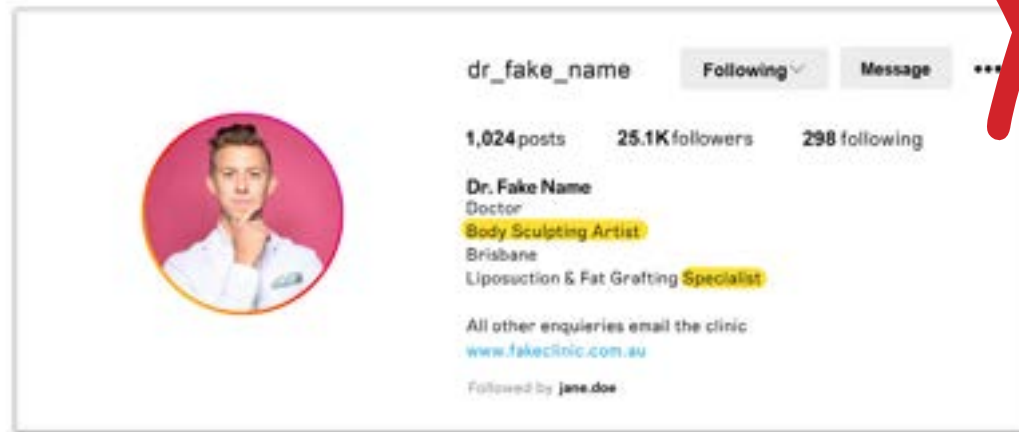
The guidelines describe responsible practice when advertising cosmetic surgery. Good practice cosmetic surgery advertising is honest, balanced, realistic, and informative. It protects the dignity of patients and does not exploit patients.

'Cosmetic surgery' is defined in the 'Definitions' section of the guidelines.

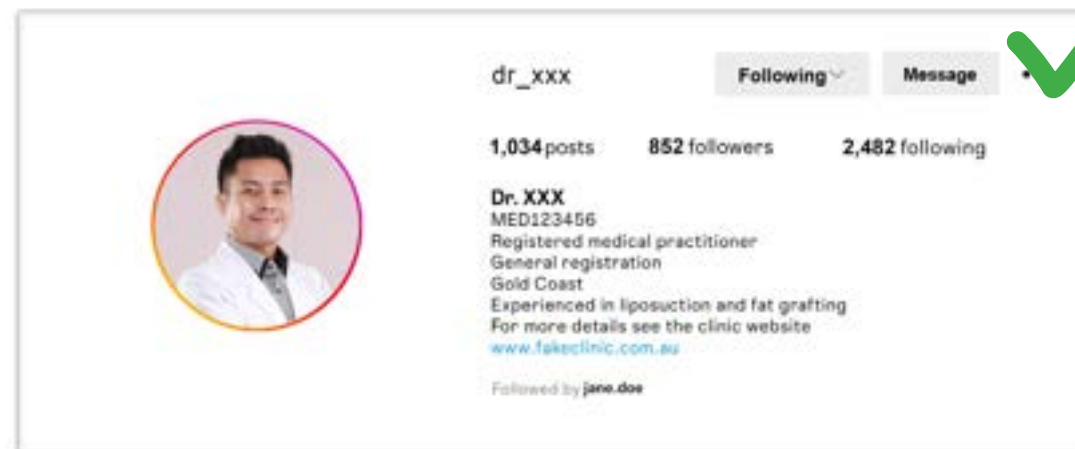
All advertising is also required to comply with the advertising requirements under the National Law and [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#).

¹ Information on consumer vulnerability is available in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) publication *Consumer vulnerability: A business guide to the Australian Consumer Law (2021)*, available at www.accc.gov.au.

Instagram profile

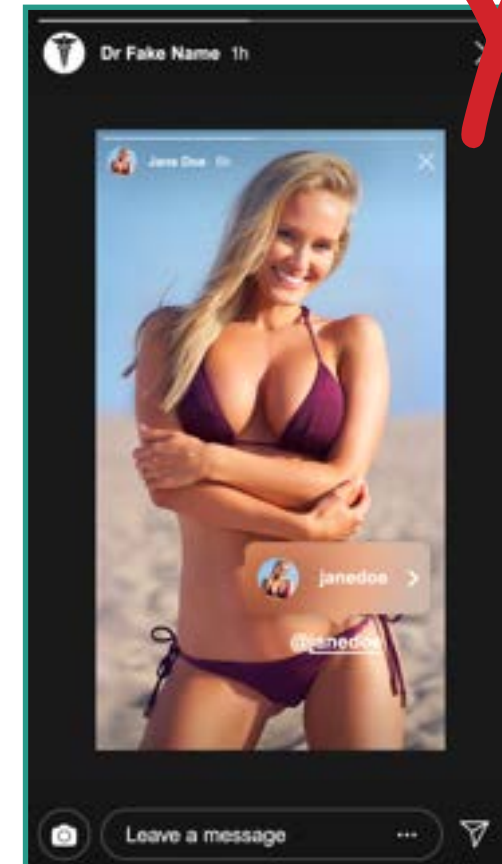
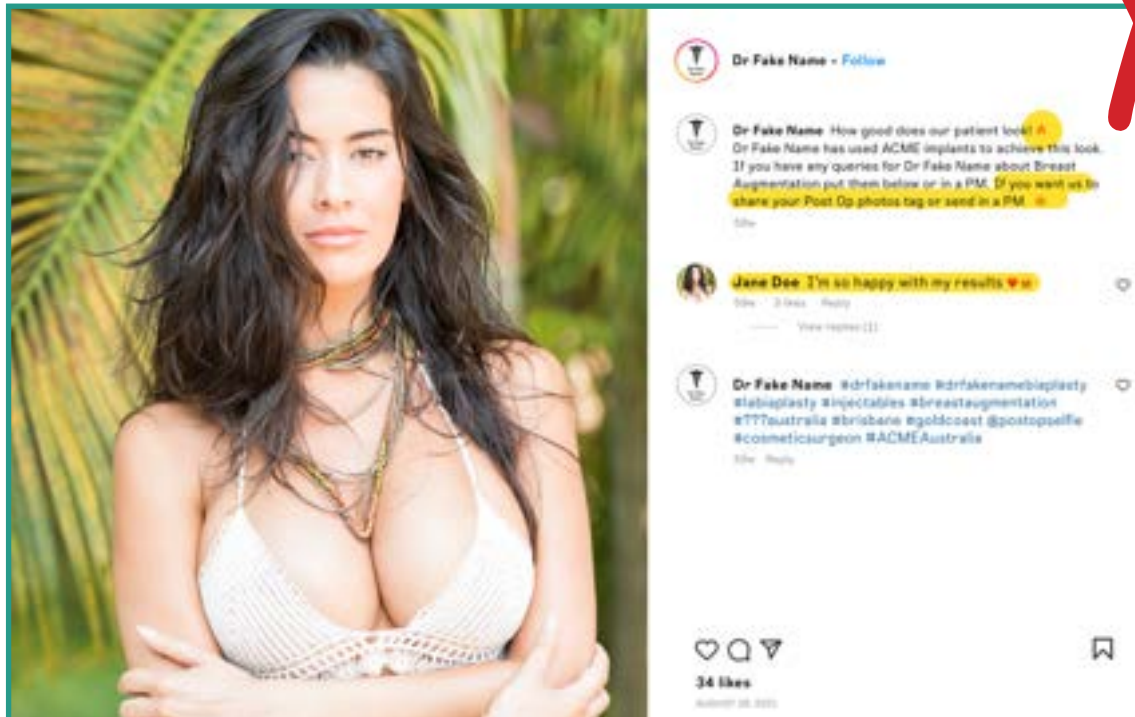


This profile does not provide the required registration information, uses terminology that trivialises cosmetic surgery and uses incorrect specialist terminology.



This profile includes required registration information and uses appropriate language to describe experience.

Testimonials / unreasonable expectations



This advertising may create unreasonable expectations due to the use of a single outcome image. Other patients may not achieve similar outcomes.

The patient response is considered a testimonial and should be removed or comments disabled.

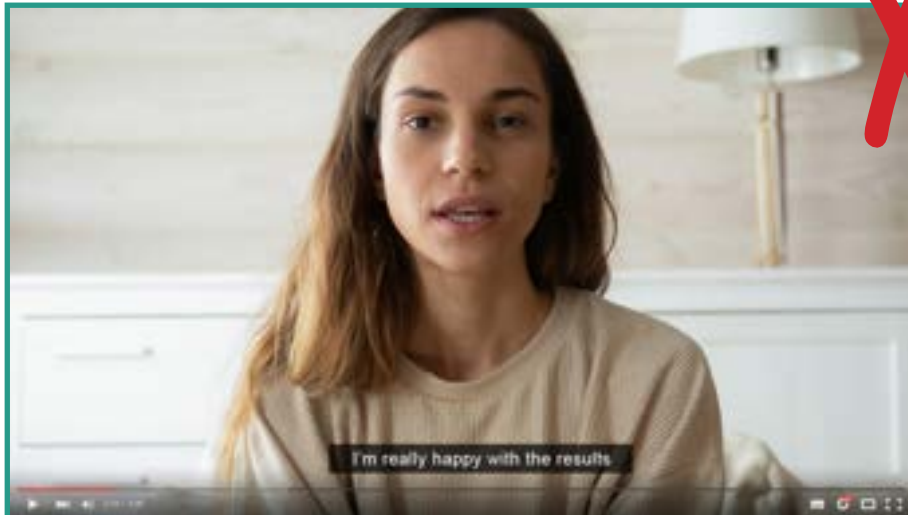
This post uses emojis, encourages testimonials, lacks a warning that outcomes may vary between patients and lacks information about risks and recovery.

The use of questions in the post is encouraging inappropriate interaction and comment about a patient's body.

Reposting a patient's content is considered a testimonial.


This advertising may create unreasonable expectations due to the use of a single outcome image. This post lacks a warning that outcomes may vary between patients and lacks information about risks and recovery.

Testimonials



Hear from our patients.

This advertising is considered a testimonial as it is a video on the practitioner's website of a patient discussing their treatment and outcomes.



Jane was a 21 year old girl who was troubled by her abdomen, waist and thighs and was really hoping to improve these areas so she could feel more confident wearing slim fitting clothing. Sometimes when multiple areas are performed, for the purpose of safety, it is best to do the procedure over 2 sessions

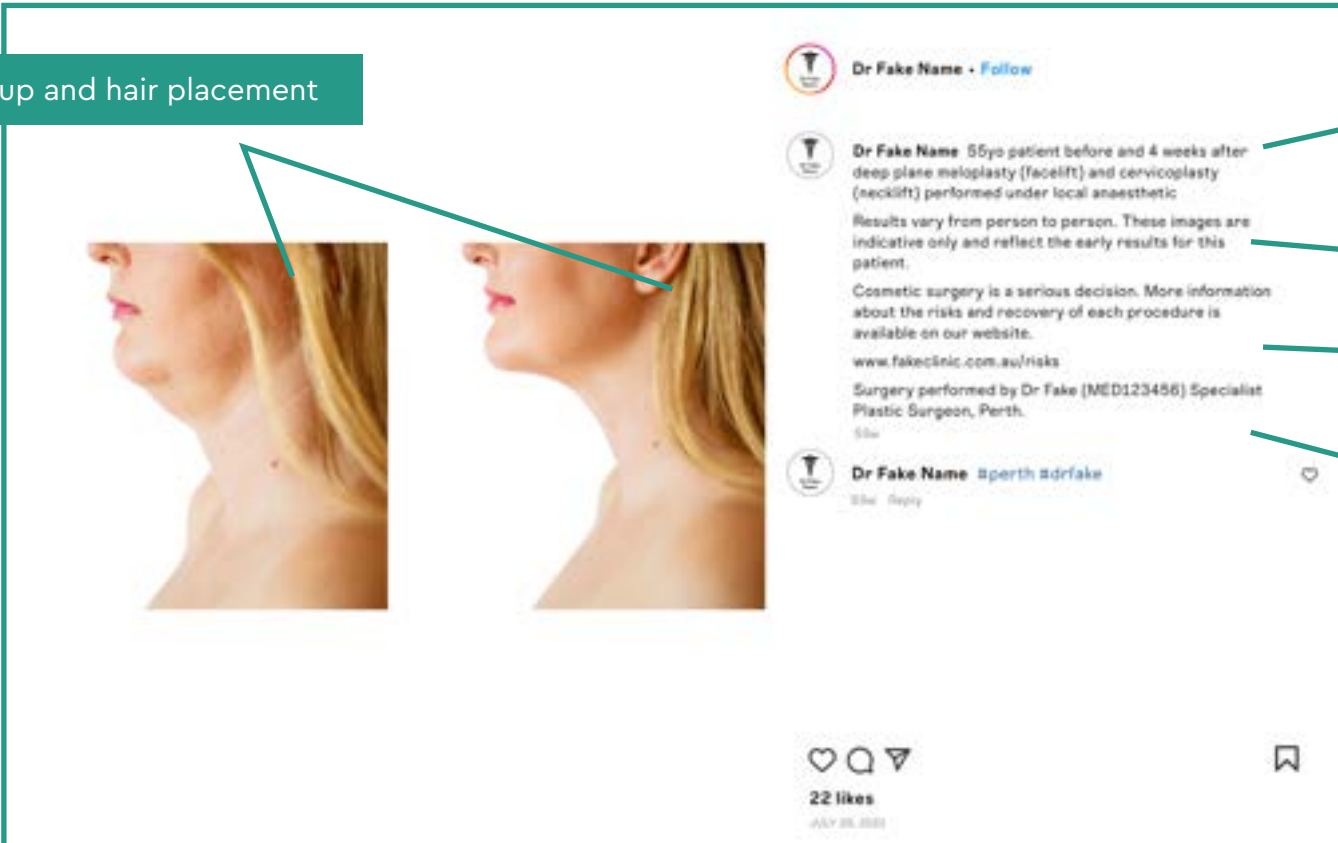
Following this procedure Jane said her self-confidence had increased and she felt motivated to exercise more as well as be more careful with her diet. Liposuction can be a psychological boost to a patient and act as a trigger for them to change their lifestyle.

This advertising is considered a testimonial (patient story) as it uses a patient voice to describe the outcomes of treatment. This advertising is misleading and may create unreasonable expectations in relation to the claimed psychological benefits.

Before and after photos



Makeup and hair placement



Use of clinical terminology and time since surgery. ✓

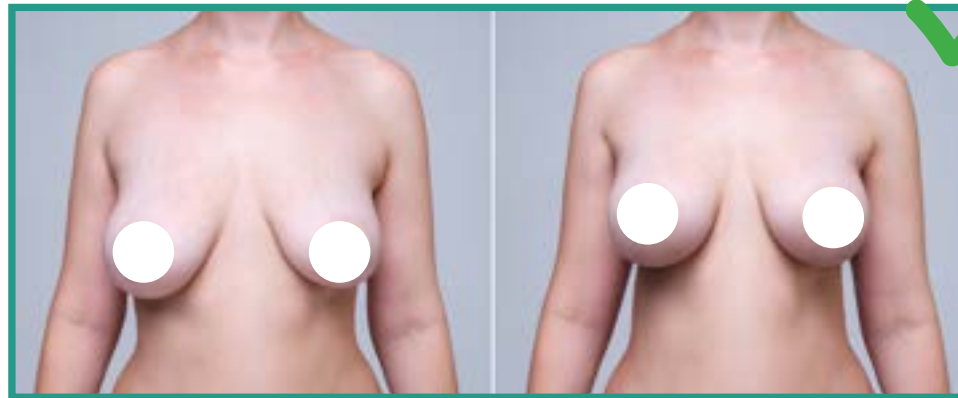
Statement the results may vary. ✓

Link to information on risk and recovery. ✓

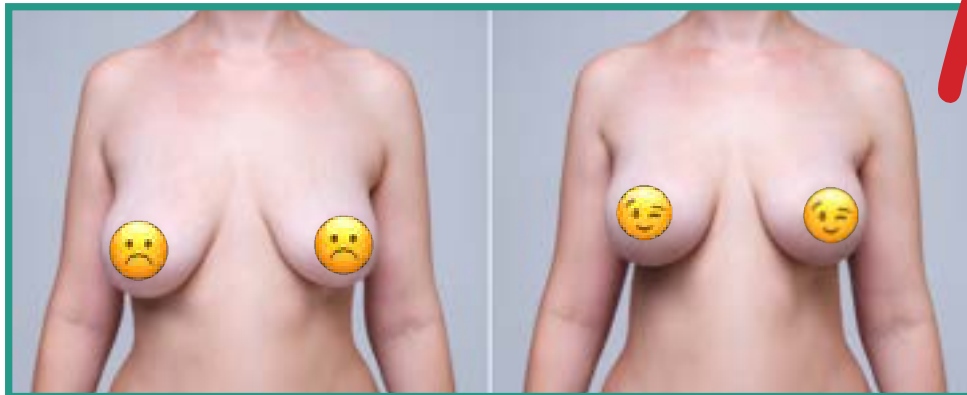
Practitioner registration details. ✓

Advertisers should be particularly careful when using before and after photos to ensure that makeup and hair placement does not cover scars. These photos could be improved by the absence of makeup and consistent hair placement, ideally tied out of the way. The post text addresses the information expected in this form of advertising. The web page listed should include prominent information about specific risks.

Use of shapes and emojis



Simple shape.



Unacceptable use of emojis.



Unacceptable use of shape that may be interpreted as emotive.

Unreasonable expectations

X Candidates For Abdominoplasty Surgery

Abdominoplasty surgery may be recommended to address any or all of the following concerns:

- Dramatic weight loss
- Isolated pockets of fat remain that will not respond to diet and exercise
- Excess folds of skin are causing irritation, rashes and infections
- Despite your weight loss, you are still unable to fit into your smaller clothing
- Dissatisfaction with your body image despite reaching your weight loss goals
- Need a boost in self confidence

This advertising may create unreasonable expectations as it overstates the benefits of surgery. Practitioners should not imply that surgery will address dissatisfaction with body image or improve self confidence.

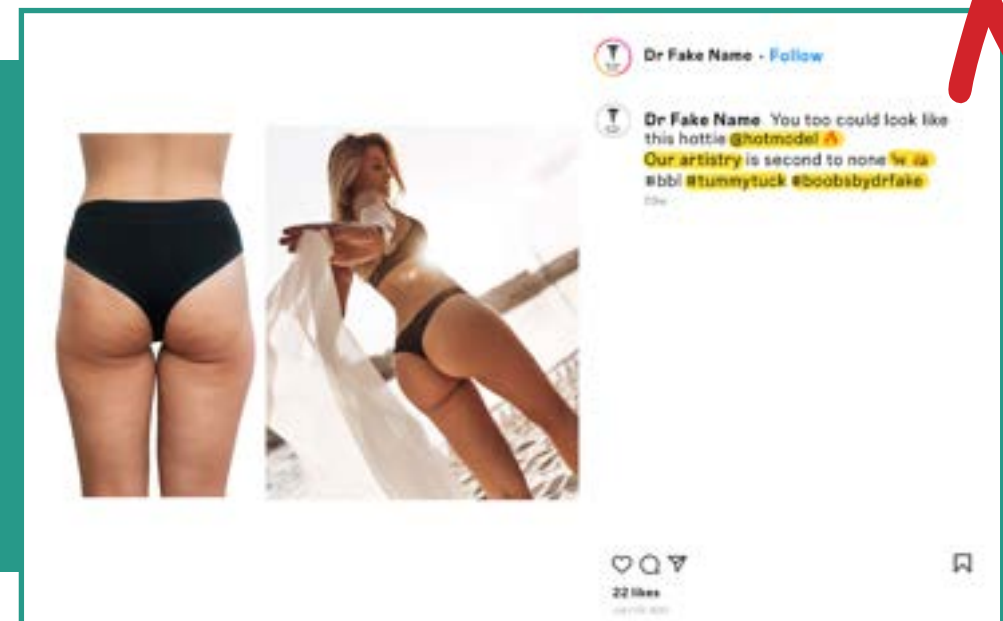
This advertising may create unreasonable expectations as the before and after photos are not in similar poses, lighting or clothing.

Use of the terms 'artistry', 'hottie' and emojis trivialise the risks associated with surgery.

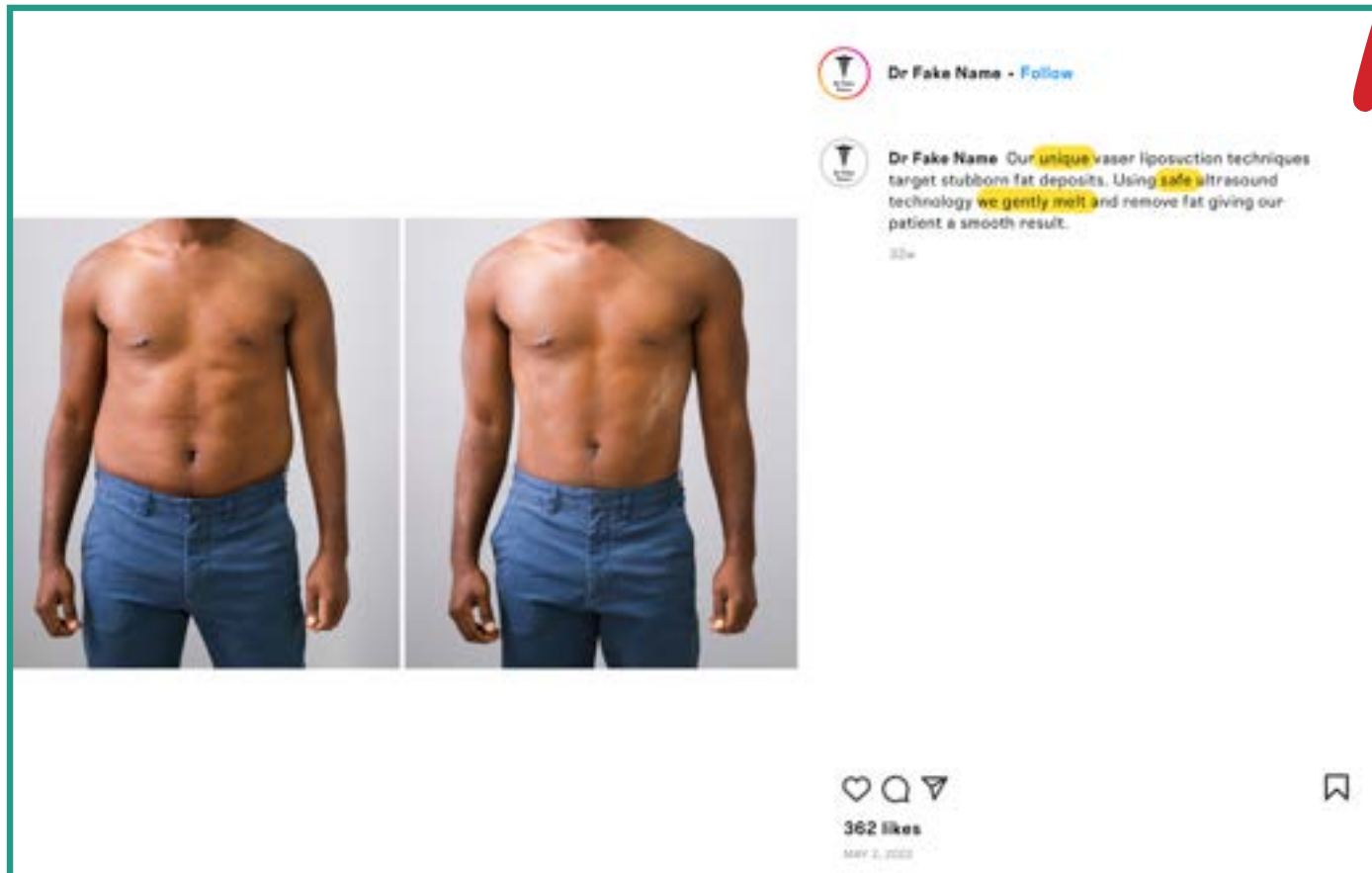
The hashtags include colloquial terms without the relevant medical term.

There is no prominent warning that outcomes may differ.

There is no prominent information about risks or recovery.



False, misleading or deceptive



This advertising is misleading as it claims to be a unique technique, gently remove fat and is safe.

This post lacks a warning that outcomes may vary between patients and lacks information about risks and recovery.

Risk and recovery



Liposuction

Procedure description
Lorem ipsum


Consultation process
Lorem ipsum

Price estimate
Lorem ipsum

Contact us

All surgery has risks

This example does not provide detail of the risks and the information is not prominent or balanced with the reported benefits. There is no information about recovery.



Liposuction

Risks
Lorem ipsum

Recovery
Lorem ipsum

Procedure description
Lorem ipsum

Consultation process
Lorem ipsum

Price estimate
Lorem ipsum

Contact us

This example provides prominent details of the risks and information about recovery.

Risks and complications of cosmetic surgery

Every surgery has its own procedure specific risks. Some general risks that can potentially occur across a number of procedures include:

Scarring

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Infection

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Pain

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Undesirable cosmetic outcome

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Nerve damage

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Bruising and swelling

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Bleeding

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Seroma

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Anaesthetic complications

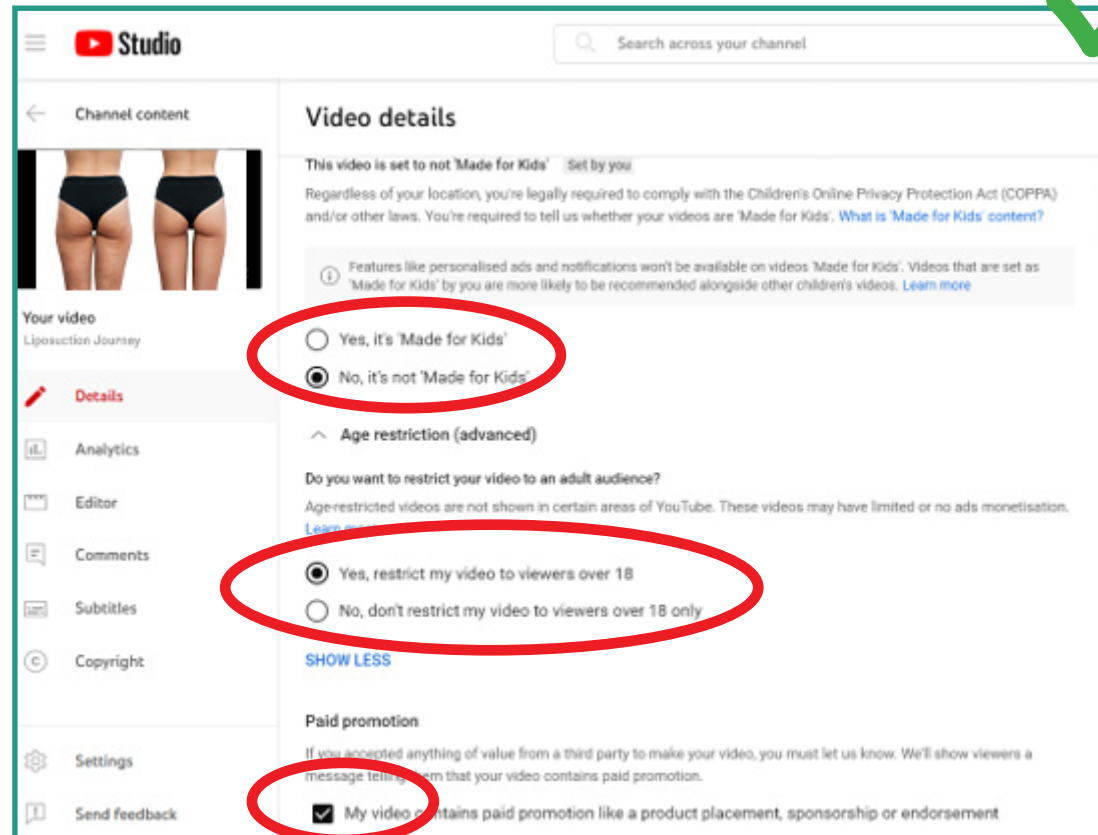
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Death

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This web page provides useful information on general risks related to surgery. Similar information on the risks related to specific procedures should be provided on the relevant procedure page.

Identifying adult content – YouTube



The image shows a screenshot of the YouTube Studio interface for a video titled "Liposuction Journey". The "Video details" section is visible, and three specific options are circled in red:

- Yes, it's 'Made for Kids'
- No, it's not 'Made for Kids'
- Yes, restrict my video to viewers over 18
- My video contains paid promotion like a product placement, sponsorship or endorsement

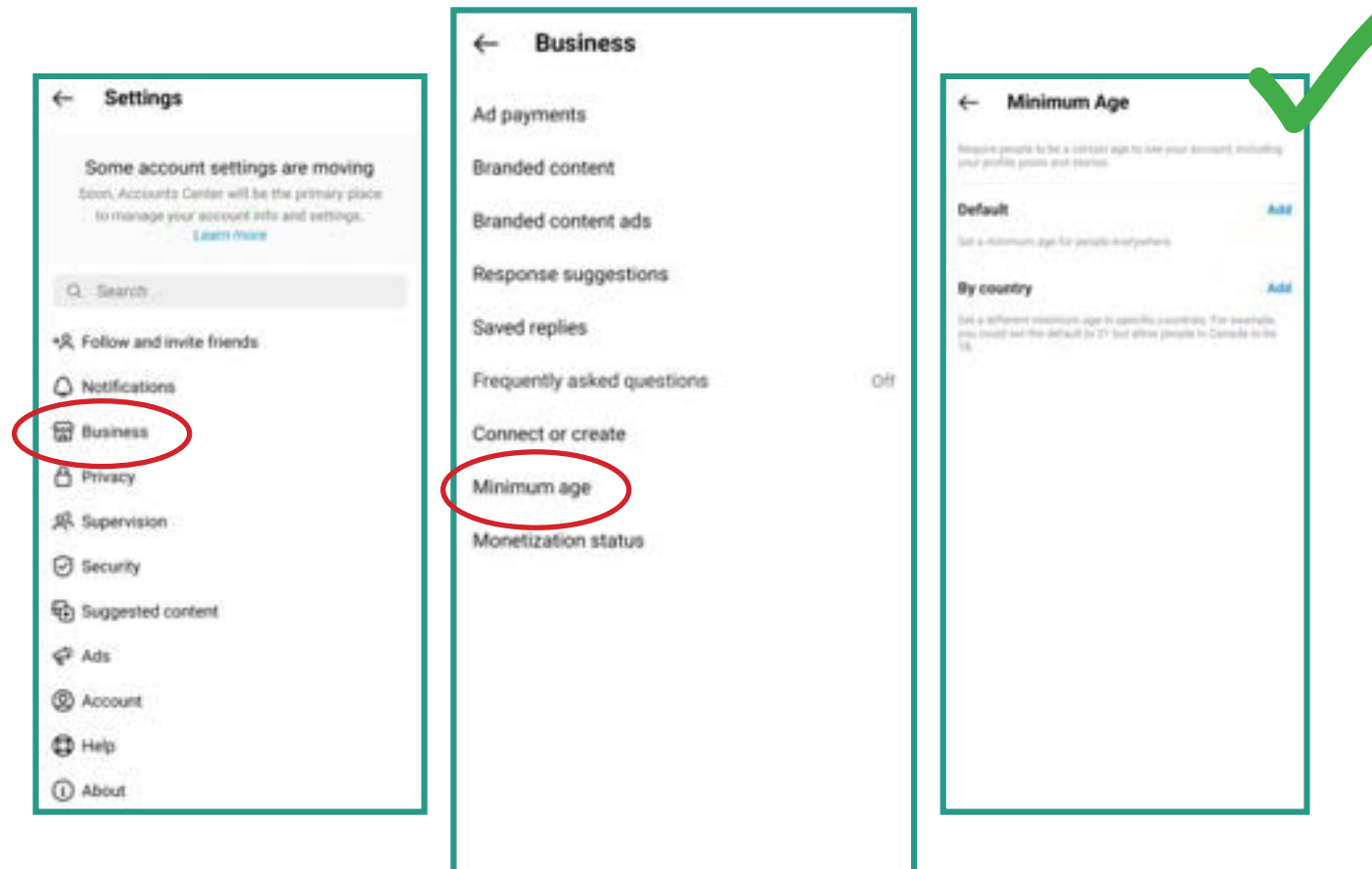
A green checkmark is visible in the top right corner of the screenshot.

Every YouTube post that advertises cosmetic surgery should identify that it is not 'made for kids' and that it should be restricted to viewers over 18.

Advertising by influencers who are being paid to promote the practitioner should also tick 'paid promotion' and meet any other platform requirements.

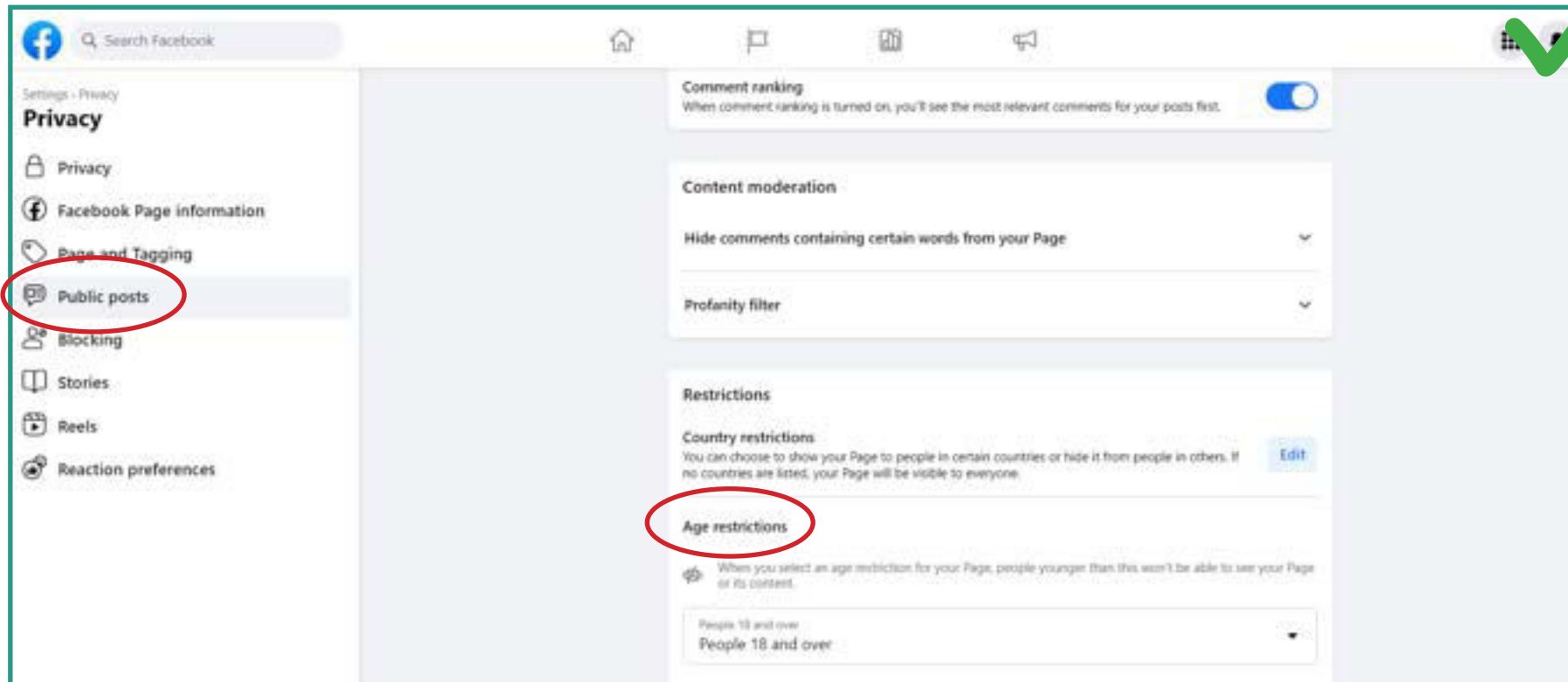
Advertising by influencers must meet the guidelines for advertising cosmetic surgery.

Identifying adult content – Instagram



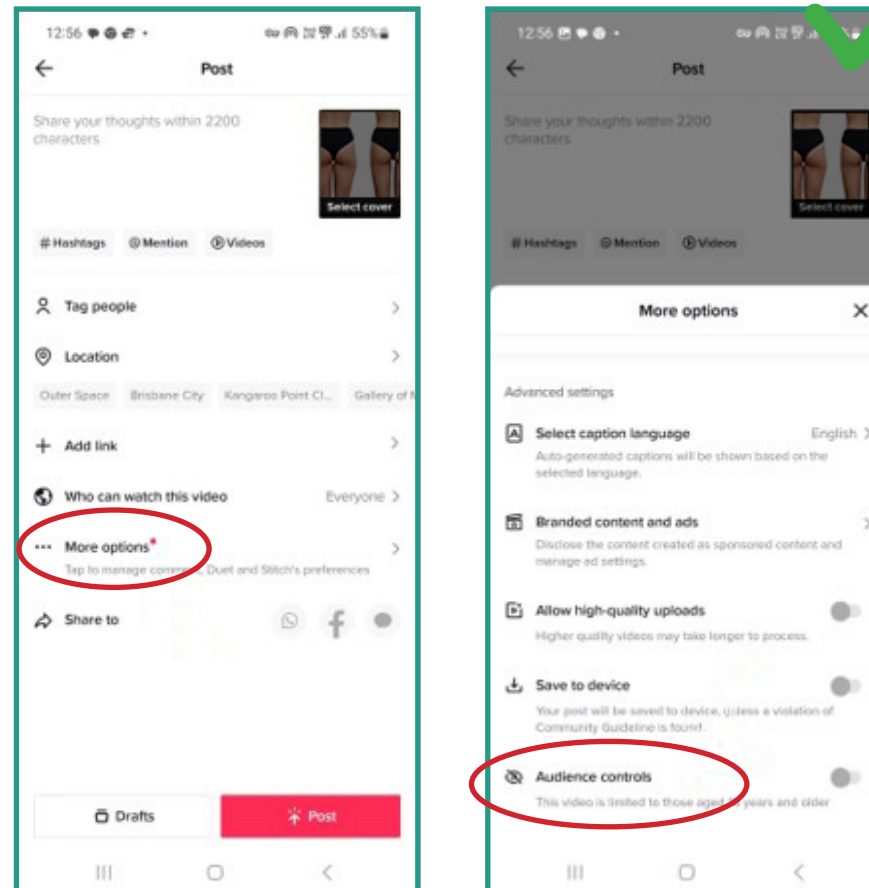
Every Instagram account that advertises cosmetic surgery should identify a minimum age of 18.

Identifying adult content – Facebook



Every Facebook page that advertises cosmetic surgery should include an age restriction for people 18 and over.

Identifying adult content – TikTok



Every TikTok post that advertises cosmetic surgery should have audience controls activated to limit the video to those aged 18 and older.



Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Contact Ahpra

Mail - GPO Box 9958 in each capital city

Web - www.ahpra.gov.au

Email - medicalboard@ahpra.gov.au

Phone - 1300 419 495 (within Australia);
+61 3 9125 3010 (outside Australia)

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