

BROWN BEAR DIGITAL

Local SEO for Plastic Surgeons

How to win the map pack in your city and turn local searches into booked consults.

A practice owner's guide | 2026 edition

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The short answer

01

For a plastic surgeon, SEO is local SEO. A patient in Charlotte is not comparing you to a surgeon in Seattle. They are choosing between you and the three practices that show up on the map when they search "tummy tuck near me." Win that local race and the rest of SEO is a rounding error. Lose it and a beautiful website will not save you.

What to do about it:

1

Fix your Google Business Profile first.

It is free, patients see it before your site, and it carries more map pack weight than almost anything on your pages.

2

Ask for reviews 2 to 4 weeks after surgery.

Run it as a front desk system, not a hope, and answer every review.

3

Give every core procedure its own page.

Target procedure plus location, and get these pages excellent before you write a single blog post.

4

Expect 3 to 6 months, not 30 days.

Map pack movement shows in 3 to 6 months. Steady consult flow builds over 6 to 12, at \$1,000 to \$5,000 a month.

A STORY WE HEAR OFTEN

A surgeon paid an agency \$4,000 a month for 18 months. His site looked beautiful and his "domain authority" climbed. His consult calendar was still half empty. It took about ten minutes to see why: he ranked nowhere in the map pack, his Google Business Profile listed the wrong hours, and his three most profitable procedures had no real page on his site.

Who this guide is for

Surgeons doing this between cases, office managers who got handed "the website," new practices in saturated metros, and owners who paid a premium once for rankings that never came.

Why plastic surgery SEO is local SEO

Cosmetic procedures are almost always bought close to home, and even patients who travel for a surgeon start by searching their own city. The prize is a spot in the map pack, the block of three practices Google shows with stars, distance, and a phone number. Google leans on proximity, reviews, and profile activity here. Backlinks and domain authority are wildly overrated: one competitor with around 400 mostly junk links still pulled in thousands of leads a month.

Signal	Weight in local medical search	What to do
Google Business Profile completeness and activity	Very high	→ Fill every field, post weekly, add fresh photos and video
Review volume, recency, and rating	Very high	→ Ask 2 to 4 weeks post-procedure, answer every review
Proximity to the searcher	High and fixed	→ Cannot change location, so win on the signals you control
NAP consistency across directories	High	→ One exact format everywhere, clean up old listings
Procedure pages targeting "procedure plus location"	High	→ One strong page per core procedure
Backlinks	Low to medium, rises in big metros	→ Pursue quality links only once the basics are solid

What patients do before they book

- 1 They search something **broad**, like "rhinoplasty cost" or "mommy makeover near me."
- 2 They **scan the map pack** and click two or three practices.
- 3 They **read the reviews and galleries** and check board certification.
- 4 They **come back weeks later** and book with the practice that felt safest.

Start with your Google Business Profile

03

If you do nothing else this month, fix your profile. It is the single biggest lever in local medical search, and most practices treat it like an afterthought. For an office manager, this is the highest-return hour you will spend all quarter.

Name and categories

Use your real practice name. Keyword stuffing can get you suspended. Set the primary category to "Plastic surgeon" or "Cosmetic surgeon," then add every secondary category that genuinely applies.

Photos, and keep adding them

Exterior, interior, team, logo, and before-and-after work with documented consent. Name files descriptively, like "breast-augmentation-before-after-austin.jpg."

Video and Google Posts

A 30-second practice tour or a surgeon explaining a procedure. Post at least once a week so Google sees an actively managed listing.

Every field, every question

Turn on messaging and booking if the front desk can keep up. Answer Q&A yourself. Fill in hours, holiday hours, services, appointment link, and service area.

One name, address, and phone everywhere

Google cross-checks NAP to decide whether it trusts your location. Pick one exact format and match it on Healthgrades, RealSelf, Vitals, Zocdoc, Yelp, and your own site.

Build a real review habit

Ask 2 to 4 weeks after a procedure, once the patient is past the rough early recovery and happy with progress. An automated text or email from the front desk can multiply review volume within a few months. Answer every review. A thoughtful reply to a hard one often persuades more than the five-star praise above it.

THE GUARDRAIL

Never pay for, incentivize, fabricate, or selectively suppress reviews. The FTC has tightened its rules, and healthcare practices are squarely in scope.

Procedure pages that rank and convert

04

The most common mistake is a gorgeous homepage and one thin "Services" page that lumps twelve procedures into a few sentences each. That cannot rank and cannot convince. Every core procedure deserves its own page, targeting procedure plus location, like "breast augmentation in Austin." It should cover what the procedure involves, who is a good candidate, recovery, realistic cost ranges, and your own before-and-after work. It should read like a calm, honest consultation, not a brochure.

90%+

of winners put the city in the title tag, the closest thing to a universal ranking factor in the data.

52%

of #1 results are the practice homepage, not a procedure page. Build both.

93%

of winners have a gallery. Treat it as its own asset, since photo searches rank a separate URL.

Source: Brown Bear 101-city study of what ranks for a major procedure search, brownbear.digital/data/procedure-page-ranking-factors-2026.

In small and mid-size metros, a tightly themed practice site can take the top spot with its homepage. In major metros, the winners are overwhelmingly deep dedicated pages. Google decides which URL to surface market by market.

Show the surgeon, not just the practice

Name the operating physician, state board certification clearly, and link to a real bio with training and credentials. American Board of Plastic Surgery certification and American Society of Plastic Surgeons membership are trust signals patients look for and search engines reward.

THE BLOG MYTH

For a new or mid-size practice, a blog is usually the wrong first move. A post on "five tips for faster recovery" rarely brings in a patient ready to book. A complete page on the procedure they want does. Money pages first, supporting content second.

Links, technical SEO, and compliance

05

Backlinks depend on your city

Smaller or mid-size city

A complete profile, strong reviews, and excellent procedure pages can reach the top of the map pack with very few links. Links are a finishing touch.

Major metro

Getting a surgeon to the top "in a major city like LA or NY certainly won't work without links." Quality links are part of the price of entry: real medical directories, local press, reputable industry sites.

The technical basics, done right and left alone

- ◆ A site that loads fast on a phone.
- ◆ Clean page structure and secure hosting.
- ◆ Local business schema so search engines understand your location and services.
- ◆ No broken or duplicate pages quietly competing with each other.

Compliance is where agencies cut corners

Plastic surgery sits under HIPAA, FTC advertising rules, and state medical board guidelines. Many general marketing firms do not account for that.

- ◆ Before-and-after images need documented patient consent.
- ◆ Review and testimonial practices need to follow advertising rules.
- ◆ Patient data and contact forms need to be handled in line with HIPAA.

Running local SEO across multiple locations

06

Each location competes in its own map pack, against its own neighbors. The biggest mistake is a separate website or microsite per office. It splits authority across weak domains, creates duplicate content, and multiplies maintenance and compliance work. Keep one strong site, with a dedicated page per office at a clean URL like yoursite.com/locations/austin.

Element	Best practice per location	Common mistake
Google Business Profile	→ A separate, verified profile per office with its own address, local phone, and hours	One profile for all, or a shared phone number
Location page	→ Unique page with its own surgeons, staff, photos, directions, and city-specific copy	Boilerplate where only the city name changes
Reviews	→ Route each patient to review the office they visited	Pooling all reviews under one profile
NAP consistency	→ Each location matched across directories independently	Mixing addresses or one central number
Schema markup	→ LocalBusiness schema per page with that office's exact address	No schema, or one address sitewide
Authorship	→ Name the surgeon who operates at each location	A generic "our team" on every page

Mention the neighborhoods you serve, the parking, the surgeons who see patients there, and the procedures that office specializes in. When two location pages read almost the same, Google struggles to rank either.

EXPANDING?

Treat each new office as its own local launch: new profile, new reviews, new citations. Plan for the same 3 to 6 month ramp as any new practice, and start with the location that has the most growth headroom.

Ads, costs, and choosing an SEO partner

07

SEO compounds and lowers your cost per patient, but it is slow. Paid ads buy visibility today while SEO builds the asset. Think of it as a sequence, not a rivalry.

Your situation	Start with	Why
Brand-new practice, competitive metro, empty calendar	→ Paid ads, SEO in parallel	You need consults now, and SEO is months out
Established practice, steady flow, growth goal	→ SEO first	Compounds and lowers cost per patient
One high-margin procedure to push fast	→ Paid ads for that procedure	Targeted, immediate, easy to measure
Smaller market, light competition	→ SEO first	Local signals alone can win the map pack

Market type	Monthly investment	First map pack movement	Steady consult flow
Smaller city, light competition	\$1,000 to \$2,500	3 to 4 months	6 to 9 months
Mid-size metro	\$2,500 to \$4,000	4 to 6 months	9 to 12 months
Major metro: LA, NYC, Miami	\$4,000 to \$5,000 and up	6 months or more	12 months and ongoing

Five questions to ask an agency

- ◆ **Do they rank themselves** in the map pack for their own service terms?
- ◆ **Do they start with your profile and reviews**, or open with backlinks and a content calendar?
- ◆ **Are they honest about timelines?** Page one in 30 days means junk keywords.
- ◆ **Do they know medical compliance:** consent, HIPAA, and FTC review rules?
- ◆ **Do they report on calls, consults, and booked procedures**, not "domain authority"?

Is your practice winning local search?

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Answer for your practice as it stands today. Each "no" is a gap. Start with the profile and reviews, since they move the map pack fastest.

Question	Yes	Partly	No
GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE			
Is your primary category "Plastic surgeon" or "Cosmetic surgeon," with every relevant secondary category added?	☐	☐	☐
Do you post at least weekly and keep adding fresh photos and video?	☐	☐	☐
Is every field filled in, including holiday hours, services, and appointment link, with Q&A answered?	☐	☐	☐
Are your name, address, and phone identical across Healthgrades, RealSelf, Vitals, Zocdoc, Yelp, and your site?	☐	☐	☐
REVIEWS			
Does your front desk send an automated review request 2 to 4 weeks after each procedure?	☐	☐	☐
Do you answer every review, including the critical ones?	☐	☐	☐
WEBSITE			
Does every core procedure have its own page targeting procedure plus location?	☐	☐	☐
Is your city in the title tag of those pages?	☐	☐	☐
Is the operating surgeon named, with board certification and a linked bio?	☐	☐	☐
Were your procedure pages excellent before you started a blog?	☐	☐	☐
COMPLIANCE AND PARTNERS			
Do you have documented consent for every before-and-after image, and HIPAA-ready contact forms?	☐	☐	☐
Does your agency report on calls, consults, and booked procedures instead of domain authority?	☐	☐	☐

YES

PARTLY

NO

Frequently asked questions

09

Q How long does local SEO take for a plastic surgery practice?

Map pack movement usually starts to show within 3 to 6 months. A steady flow of consult requests from organic search builds over 6 to 12 months. Anyone promising faster is selling a story.

Q How much does it cost?

Generally \$1,000 to \$5,000 a month, depending on how competitive your city is. Smaller markets can do well at the lower end. Major metros need more, because the link and content work is harder.

Q Do backlinks matter?

It depends on your city. In a smaller market, links are a finishing touch. In a major metro like LA or NYC, quality links are part of the price of entry.

Q Should I start a blog?

Not first. Get your procedure pages excellent before you write a single blog post. Once they are strong, articles can reach patients earlier in their research.

Q Should I do SEO or paid ads first?

A brand-new practice that needs consults now can lean on paid ads while SEO builds. An established practice with steady flow can usually invest in SEO first and use ads for specific procedures or slow seasons.

Q Should each location have its own website?

No. Keep one strong site with a dedicated page per office, plus a separate verified Google Business Profile for each location.

Next steps

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- 1 **Fix your Google Business Profile this month.** Categories, photos, posts, every field, and one NAP format everywhere.
- 2 **Turn reviews into a system.** An automated ask 2 to 4 weeks after each procedure, and a reply to every review.
- 3 **Build one strong page per core procedure** before you spend on a redesign or a blog.
- 4 **Talk to someone who does local SEO for plastic surgery.** A clear, honest look at where your practice stands and what it would take to own your local market.

WORK WITH BROWN BEAR

Brown Bear Digital builds local-first SEO campaigns for practices tired of paying for activity instead of patients, starting with the signals that move the map pack. brownbear.digital/contact | bryan@brownbear.digital



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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For informational purposes only. This guide is not legal, medical, or professional advice, and results are not guaranteed.

Check HIPAA, FTC review and endorsement rules, and your state medical board guidelines before you request reviews or publish testimonials or before-and-after photos.