

## **American Woman Dies After Getting Plastic Surgery in the Dominican Republic**

An alarming headline, for sure, but what's perhaps even more alarming is that this is the third medical tourism death in just five weeks. Earlier this month, 33-year-old Alexandra Medina died during liposuction; two other U.S. residents died in June, also after having elective surgeries in the Dominican Republic. It's a disturbing new indication that more and more people are surgery shopping outside our borders, a dangerous and risky move. "The U.S. has the most highly trained and rigidly overseen plastic surgeons in the world," says Dr. Gerald Imber, a New York City plastic surgeon and director of the Youth Corridor Clinic. "Our goal is to meet your needs and keep you safe. Medical tourism offers virtually none of these safeguards and is a crapshoot, at best."

So why are passports and plastic surgery suddenly going hand in hand? Not surprisingly, lower costs are often the motivation. And in Medina's case, it was also a matter of finding a doctor to perform the surgery; U.S. surgeons refused to operate on her until she lost weight. She found a doctor in the D.R. via social media who was willing to do it. "Weight is a definite factor in pre-operative risk assessment," explains New York City plastic surgeon Dr. Melissa Doff. "Many doctors don't want to perform elective surgery on a patient with a BMI greater than 30, and some will even cap it at 27 or 28." While that applies to any elective surgery, it's paramount for lipo. You need to remove much more fat in an obese patient to see a noticeable difference, and large-volume liposuction has a higher risk of complications, such as blood clots and infections, she adds.