# The rise of looksmaxxing: a dangerous obsession with appearance among young men



A disturbing trend known as ‘looksmaxxing’ has emerged as a growing preoccupation among young men striving to enhance their physical appearance, often pushing the boundaries into alarming and hazardous practices. The Daily Mail has conducted an in-depth investigation into this phenomenon, revealing the extreme methods some individuals adopt, including a dangerous practice dubbed ‘bone-smashing’, which is touted by its followers as a form of self-care aimed at sharpening their facial bone structure.

Looksmaxxing began in the early 2010s as a relatively innocuous pursuit of aesthetic improvement through better hygiene, fitness, and skin care routines. However, as the trend gained momentum, some adherents have escalated their efforts to include the use of steroids, chemical peels, cosmetic surgeries, and risky at-home treatments like repeatedly punching or hammering their faces, a practice described as bone-smashing. This is done despite significant medical risks.

Dr Lara Devgan, a board-certified plastic surgeon who spoke to the Daily Mail, warned of the dangers associated with such practices. She stated, “Drastic looksmaxxing like bone-smashing is extremely unwise, highly dangerous, and betrays a total lack of understanding of the complexity of facial anatomy.” The potential complications she identified include fractures, muscle and nerve injuries, vascular damage, haematomas, and even facial paralysis. According to Dr Devgan, the trend preys on the insecurities of young men who lack sufficient knowledge of the medical risks involved.

Sociologist Dr Jamilla Rosdahl from the University of Melbourne highlighted a worrying trend of increasingly younger participants engaging with looksmaxxing, often starting as early as age 13. She commented, “It starts with boys, probably as young as 13... with just a couple of clicks they are taken down into sort of more radicalised attitudes and ideas.” Dr Rosdahl emphasised the need for education among children and teens about the dangers of this pursuit.

One of the epicentres of looksmaxxing is the online forum Looksmaxxing.org, which boasts over 66,000 members and more than 19 million posts. The Daily Mail gained access to the community, where they found disturbing interactions among predominantly young males. Many participants post photos seeking ratings and advice, often receiving harsh, sometimes cruel, responses encouraging steroid use, surgery, or expressing hopelessness about their appearance. Some users suggest contemplating suicide, known in this online lexicon as ‘roping’, which has been met with callous replies.

The community has developed an elaborate system of rating attractiveness, ranging from ‘incel’ (involuntary celibate) for very low scores, progressing through various ‘normie’ levels, to ‘Chad’ and ‘Gigachads’ for the most conventionally attractive individuals. The forum encourages an obsession with specific facial measurements and ratios, often accompanied by homemade manuals detailing these standards.

Plastic surgeon Dr Akshay Sanan also commented to the Daily Mail that patients influenced by these forums often approach consultations with a misguided understanding of facial aesthetics, stating, “They come in talking like they've read a surgical textbook… if they’re talking about specific angle measurements… that to me is a red flag.” Both Dr Sanan and Dr Devgan have observed a surge in young men seeking plastic surgery due to influences from looksmaxxing, with Dr Sanan noting, “In the past two or three years the number of young men coming in has skyrocketed.”

The personal account of 24-year-old Lewis Friedenthal from New York illustrates the pressures and consequences faced by individuals immersed in looksmaxxing culture. Friedenthal describes how insecurities about his appearance led him to invest heavily in cosmetic procedures, including two rhinoplasties, chin and jawline augmentations, fillers, and Botox. He estimates spending around $75,000 on these treatments.

“I started booking appointments for more serious operations... It’s a rabbit hole,” Friedenthal explained. However, his journey was not without complications. In November 2023, a filler treatment on his jaw produced swelling and a delayed reaction, resulting in nodules that required further medical intervention, including steroid injections.

This experience prompted him to consult board-certified plastic surgeon Dr Jennifer Levine, who advised him on the risks and helped him realise many procedures were unnecessary and potentially harmful. Friedenthal shared, “I want every single thing perfect, but Dr Levine reminds me, you don’t need it.” He now cautions others against extreme measures like bone-smashing, stating, “Trying things at home, like bone smashing stuff or things like that is super dangerous.”

Among creators in the looksmaxxing space, some strive to promote healthier approaches. A notable figure known as Ahmet, 21, who shares content under the name Adix and has 250,000 TikTok followers, seeks to counteract the more toxic elements of the trend. “I was never a fan of that side... people were harming themselves, or trying to inject stuff into their face,” he told the Daily Mail. Ahmet focuses on encouraging positive self-improvement rather than dangerous extremes. However, he acknowledges the links between looksmaxxing and the online ‘incel’ community, where failure to find romantic success often breeds misogyny and hate toward women. “There’s lots of hate speech, there’s lots of misogynistic stuff,” he said, urging his audience to avoid such paths.

Dr Rosdahl underscored the broader social ramifications of these communities, observing that they foster hatred, competition, and anger, which can extend beyond individual participants. “In a lot of these looksmaxxing forums with just a couple of clicks you will be taken to misogynist beliefs and the glorification of violence against women,” she stated.

The looksmaxxing phenomenon, while rooted in the desire for self-improvement, exposes the complex intersections of body image, mental health, internet culture, and social behaviours, reflecting a troubling pattern of escalating insecurity and harmful practices among young men globally.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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