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# BIG BEARD

The latest cosmetic fad in the GCC for men is a facial hair transplant



**H**air transplants, which offer a permanent solution to hair loss and balding, have been in vogue for a while now, but there's another trend in town and it seems to be catching the attention of most men, especially those of Arab origin – a beard transplant.

Having a full beard is viewed as having a valuable asset and a sign of masculinity. Unfortunately, not every man has been blessed with the ability to grow one.

Most men who find it hard to grow full facial hair are now opting for a beard transplant, which is becoming as popular as scalp hair transplants. According to the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery 2015 Practice Census Results, in 2014, 89.1 per cent of hair transplant procedures targetted the scalp area and 10.9 percent of procedures targeted non-scalp areas of the body – including eyebrow (5.5 per cent), face/moustache/beard (3.7 per cent) and eyelash (0.6 per cent) areas. The face/moustache/beard transplant showed a dramatic increase from 1.5 per cent in 2012.

Anisa Vrabac, head of the hair transplant department at Dubai Cosmetic Surgery clinic, agrees that the numbers of men trickling into the clinic for this hairy procedure has more than doubled in the last couple of years. "This is because men in and outside the UAE have realised that they can have a full beard that is natural and permanent."

Facial hair transplants are not only for those with a non-existent beard. "There are men who tend to have a patchy beard, which according to them is more embarrassing and frustrating than having none at all," adds Anisa. "This makes one choose between going without a beard completely and having a full one once and for all through the beard transplant."

Other reasons men want to beef up the beard include covering up trauma or acne scars, the need to look more mature or younger and wanting to copy the style of favourite celebrities.

Facial hair loss, says Anisa, is normally caused by a number of issues, with hormonal imbalance being at the top. "Others include genetics, nutritional imbalance, trauma and underlying health issues."

In the Arab world, explains Anisa, full facial hair is mostly associated with masculinity and it is more a part of their heritage. "This particular reason explains

why a bigger portion of our clients at Dubai Cosmetic Surgery clinic seeking a beard transplant are of Arab origin from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and other surrounding countries in the region. Having a thick and prominent beard also gives a man a higher status symbol. "Traditionally it is a sign of virility and strength," she says.

The procedure is very similar to that of scalp hair transplants, only this time the hairs are being transplanted to the face.

"We start by extracting hair follicles from a donor area, which is usually at the back of your head because this is where the hair is at its thickest. A method known as FUE (Follicular Unit Extraction) is used, whereby grafts are harvested one by one. FUE is more preferable because it's less invasive with a shorter downtime," says Anisa.

Depending on the size of the area, whether it's the moustache or goatee or any other area, the number can range anywhere from 500 grafts for the moustache



to 1,500 grafts for the goatee and up to 3,000 grafts for a full beard. A beard hair transplant can take anywhere from two hours to eight hours depending on the number of grafts to be transplanted.

The transplanted hair, according to Anisa, grows just like normal beard hair. "It is permanent and natural-looking, and after the final results which take six to 12 months to show, the person can shave, style and even colour without any worry."

The cost of a beard transplant at Dubai Cosmetic Surgery clinic starts from AED15,000 (RO1,572) upwards, depending on the number of grafts needed.