

Liposuction

Liposuction is a surgical procedure that can help sculpt the body by removing unwanted fat from specific areas, including the abdomen, hips, buttocks, thighs, knees, upper arms, chin, cheeks and neck. During the past decade, liposuction, which is also known as "lipoplasty" or "suction lipectomy," has benefited from several new technological refinements. Today, a number of new techniques, including ultrasound-assisted lipoplasty (UAL), the tumescent technique, laser assisted and irrigation techniques, are helping many plastic surgeons to provide selected patients with more precise results and quicker recovery times. Although no type of liposuction is a substitute for dieting and exercise, liposuction can remove stubborn areas of fat that don't respond to traditional weight-loss and toning methods. Areas of excessive skin may have to be removed at the time of your procedure.

To be a good candidate for liposuction, you must have realistic expectations about what these procedures can do for you. It's important to understand that liposuction can enhance your appearance and self confidence, but it won't necessarily change your looks to match your ideal or cause other people to treat you differently. Before you decide to have surgery, think carefully about your expectations and discuss them with your plastic surgeon. The best candidates for liposuction are normal-weight patients with firm, elastic skin who have pockets of excess fat in certain areas. You should be physically healthy, psychologically stable and realistic in your expectations. Your age is not a major consideration; however, older patients may have diminished skin elasticity and may not achieve the same results as a younger patient with tighter skin. Liposuction carries greater risk for individuals with medical problems such as diabetes, significant heart or lung disease, poor blood circulation, or those who have recently had surgery near the area to be contoured.

In your initial consultation, your surgeon will assess your health, determine where your fat deposits lie and assess the condition of your skin. Your surgeon will explain which of the various body-contouring methods that may be most appropriate for you. For example, if you believe you want liposuction in the abdominal area, you may learn that an abdominoplasty or "tummy tuck" may more effectively meet your goals especially if you have multiple pregnancies; or that a combination of traditional liposuction and UAL would be the best choice for you. Be frank and honest in discussing your expectations with your surgeon. He or she should be equally frank with you, describing the procedure in detail and explaining its risks and limitations.

Individuals considering liposuction often feel a bit overwhelmed by the number of options and techniques being promoted today. However, this is where your plastic surgeon can help. In deciding which is the right treatment approach for you, your doctor will consider effectiveness, safety, cost and appropriateness for your needs. This is called surgical judgment, a skill that is developed through surgical training and experience. Your doctor also uses this judgement to prevent complications; to handle unexpected occurrences during surgery; and to treat complications when they occur.

For men, common sites for liposuction include under the chin and around the waist. Liposuction may also be used in the reduction of enlarged male breasts, a condition known as gynecomastia. Often in the female patient the best candidates for liposuction are of normal weight with localized areas of excess fat-- for example, in the buttocks, hips, and thighs.

The time required to perform liposuction may vary considerably, depending on the size/ location of the area, the amount of fat being removed, the type of anesthesia and the technique used.

Liposuction is a procedure in which localized deposits of fat are removed to re-contour one or more areas of the body. Through a small incision, a narrow tube or cannula is inserted and used to vacuum the fat layer that lies deep beneath the skin. The cannula is pushed then pulled through the fat layer, breaking up the fat cells and suctioning them out. The suction action is provided by a vacuum pump or a large syringe, depending on the plastic surgeon's preference. Sometimes ultrasound, laser or fluid is utilized to break up areas of the localized fat. Fluid is lost along with the fat, and it's crucial that this fluid be replaced during the procedure to prevent shock. For this reason, patients need to be carefully monitored and receive intravenous (IV) fluids during and immediately after surgery. A snug compression garment worn immediately after surgery helps reduce swelling and bruising. Improvement will become apparent after surgery but it may take about six weeks, when most of the swelling has subsided to get a better idea of your result.

Fluid Injection, a technique in which a medicated solution is injected into fatty areas before the fat is removed, is commonly used by plastic surgeons today. The fluid -- a mixture of intravenous salt solution, lidocaine (a local anesthetic) and epinephrine (a

drug that contracts blood vessels) - helps the fat be removed more easily, reduces blood loss and provides anesthesia during and after surgery. Fluid injection also helps to reduce the amount of bruising occurring after surgery. The amount of fluid that is injected varies depending on the preference of the plastic surgeon. Large volumes of fluid -- sometimes as much as three times the amount of fat to be removed -- are injected in the tumescent technique. Tumescent liposuction performed only with local anesthesia usually takes significantly longer than traditional liposuction (sometimes as long as 4 to 5 hours). The super-wet technique is similar to the tumescent technique, except that lesser amounts of fluid are used. Usually the amount of fluid injected is equal to the amount of fat to be removed. This technique often requires IV sedation or general anesthesia and typically takes one to two hours of surgery time. Ultrasound-Assisted Lipoplasty (UAL). This technique requires the use of a special cannula that produces ultrasonic energy at the tip. As it passes through the areas of dense fat, the energy explodes the walls of a more proportional removal of fat. Laser assisted liposuction functions in a similar fashion as UAL. The laser assist to rupture fat cells allowing for the easy removal of the fat deposits, usually with less bruising. The fat is then removed with the traditional liposuction technique. UAL and Laser Liposuction have been shown to improve the ease and effectiveness of liposuction in fibrous areas of the body, such as the upper back or the enlarged male breast. They are also commonly used in secondary procedures, when enhanced precision is needed. In general, UAL and Laser Liposuction take longer to perform than traditional liposuction.

Liposuction is normally safe, as long as patients are carefully selected, the operating facility is properly equipped and the physician is adequately trained. Your surgeon must have advanced surgical skills to perform procedures that involve the removal of a large amount of fat (more than 5 liters or 5,000 cc's). Also, more extensive liposuction procedures require attentive after-care.

Imperfections in the final appearance are not uncommon after lipoplasty. The skin surface may be irregular, asymmetric or even "baggy," especially in the older patient. Numbness and pigmentation changes may occur. Sometimes, additional surgery may be recommended to remove excessive skin or fat.

After surgery, you will likely experience some fluid drainage from the incisions. Occasionally, a small drainage tube may be inserted beneath the skin for a couple of days to prevent fluid build-up called a seroma. To control swelling and to help your skin better fit its new contours, you may be fitted with a snug garment to wear over the treated area for a few weeks to a month. Healing is a gradual process. Your plastic surgeon will probably tell you to start walking around as soon as possible to reduce swelling and to help prevent blood clots from forming in your legs. You will

begin to feel better after about a week or two and you should be back at work within a few days

following your surgery. Activity that is more strenuous should be avoided for about a month as your body continues to heal. Although most of the bruising and swelling usually disappears within three weeks, some swelling may remain for six months or more.

You will see a noticeable difference in the shape or contour of your body quite soon after surgery. However, improvement will become even more apparent after about four to six weeks, when most of the swelling has subsided. After about three months, any persistent mild swelling usually disappears and the final contour will be visible.