

LIPOSCULPTURE

If you are considering surgery we want you to be thoroughly informed about this procedure. Reading this information is the first step. However, a personal consultation with your surgeon is the best way to obtain any additional information you need.

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WHAT IS LIPOSCULPTURE?

Liposculpture, also called lipoplasty or suction-assisted lipectomy, is a body contouring procedure. It removes localised deposits of excess fat from specific areas of your body by small cannulas or tubes introduced through small incisions. A vacuum apparatus applies a negative pressure and the fat is literally sucked out from your body. For example, it can slim your hips and thighs, flatten your abdomen, shape your calves and ankles, or eliminate a double chin.

IS LIPOSCULPTURE FOR ME?

Liposculpture can reduce those areas of fatty deposits that previously created unflattering bulges. Ideally the areas of contour defects should be well localised. Diffuse fatty areas are not well served by this technique. It is important to stress that this technique is in no way of substitute for weight loss or exercise.

Liposculpture is particularly well suited for women and men who are of relatively normal weight but have fat deposits making some parts of the body appear disproportionate. These localized fat deposits may be inherited and typically do not respond to dieting or exercise. Liposculpture is often the only way to eliminate them.

Liposculpture is popular among men, particularly for eliminating bulging fat around the waist. It is also very successful in a condition called gynaecomastia in which the male breasts are enlarged.

Collections of fatty tissue in any of the following areas may make you a good candidate for liposculpture:

- Abdomen
- Buttocks
- Outer thighs
- Inner thighs
- Knees, calves and ankles
- Upper arms

- The waist area
- Chin and neck
- Breast enlargement in men

Although it is possible to have liposculpture at almost any age, the best results will be obtained if your skin still has enough elasticity to achieve a smooth contour following fat removal. In some older patients where skin is inelastic, it may not re-drape completely and skin excision may be necessary.

INITIAL CONSULTATION

During the initial consultation, you will be asked to point out exactly what you would like to see improved. This will help your plastic surgeon understand your expectations and determine whether they can be realistically achieved.

You will be asked about your medical history including previous operations, past and present medical conditions and current medications. In order to provide you with the best information and safest options, it is important that you give your surgeon complete information. The medical conditions that may increase risks of surgery include high blood pressure, thyroid problems, diabetes and bleeding problems.

Your weight and your plans to lose or gain weight in the future will be factors in evaluating you for liposculpture. Your plastic surgeon may ask you about the effects of prior weight loss on the appearance of those areas which you have indicated for contouring. He will also assess the elasticity of your skin and he will judge whether any skin needs to be removed.

Usually photographs will be taken for preoperative planning and for documentation.

PREPARATION FOR SURGERY

Smokers will be asked to stop smoking 3 weeks before surgery. Aspirin and some anti-inflammatory drugs used for the treatment of arthritis can cause increased bleeding, so you

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should avoid taking these medications for 2 weeks before surgery. Liposculpture is often performed on an outpatient basis. If this is the case, arrange to have someone drive you home after surgery and to stay with you at least the first night following surgery.

Sometimes however, when the operation is extensive, a short stay in hospital may be needed. This is particularly true in the case of combined procedures.

In most cases, the operation is performed under intravenous sedation or general anaesthetic. It is therefore very important that you do not have anything to eat or drink at least six hours before surgery to make your operation safe.

THE DAY OF SURGERY

Your surgery may be performed in a hospital, or in a day surgery facility. Medications are administered for your comfort during the surgical procedure. Frequently, local anaesthesia and/or intravenous sedation are used for patients undergoing surgery, although general anaesthesia may be used. Various monitors are used to check your heart, blood pressure, pulse and the amount of oxygen circulating in your blood.

YOUR OPERATION

Because of individual factors not everyone will achieve the same results from liposculpture. The majority of liposculpture operations are performed using the tumescent technique. This technique involves the injection of large volumes of saline into the area that is to be contoured. The volume of fluid which needs to be injected depends on the estimated volume of fat which needs to be removed. The fluid improves the efficiency of liposculpture and it also minimises possible bleeding.

The surgeon will have determined the site of incisions through which he can best perform the liposculpture. Small incisions, approximately 1 cm long, are then made and the suction cannulas are introduced through them. The cannula is connected by tubing to a vacuum suction apparatus. As it is guided by the surgeon, the fat is literally sucked away from the body. Suctioning can be done into deep or more superficial layers of fat depending on the selected treatment. When the surgeon has judged that the appropriate

amount of fat has been removed, the incisions are sutured.

HOW LONG DOES THE OPERATION TAKE?

The operation takes from 1 to 3 hours, depending on the extent of each case.

WHAT ABOUT ULTRASONIC LIPOSCULPTURE?

Liposculpture can be performed with the help of an ultrasound probe which first breaks down fat cells in the treated area. It is very useful in certain cases, when the fatty tissue is interspersed with dense fibrous tissue, such as in male breast enlargement, in repeated liposculpture, and also in some extensive cases. It is likely that ultrasonic liposculpture can save some operative time and has been shown to be beneficial in reducing bleeding in the operative site. The choice between conventional and ultrasonic liposculpture should be discussed with your surgeon prior to surgery.

AFTER SURGERY

When surgery is completed you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored. There may be some discomfort for several days after the operation although this is usually not severe. Oral pain medications are usually sufficient to control the discomfort. You will be advised to rest for 24 to 72 hours. It is also possible to experience some numbness in the skin overlying the treated area but this usually disappears after some months.

You will be asked to get out of bed as soon as possible after the operation. It is also important, not to take aspirin or to smoke after the operation.

It is very important that a supportive dressing to be worn after surgery. A commercially made support garment such as long leg girdle or abdominal binder is worn immediately after surgery. The garment needs to be worn for between four and eight weeks after surgery.

It is important to realise that the amount of time it takes for recovery varies greatly among individuals.

You may have stitches along the incisions which will be removed at four to seven days, although sometimes the incisions are left open to help

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drain the fluid that accumulates in liposculpture areas.

Bruising and swelling can last up to three weeks or longer in some cases.

It is sometimes impossible to judge when the correct amount of fat has been removed. Removal of “just the right amount” and a nice even result cannot be guaranteed. Removal of just a little too much or not quite enough can occur, and this may leave contour defects such as rippling or dimpling. Irregular results are not uncommon but these can be improved significantly with postoperative massage. Very occasionally a second procedure is necessary to correct these irregularities.

ENDERMOLOGIE

Endermologie is a new process of a gentle massage, which helps greatly in reducing postoperative irregularities. Many leading liposculpture centres around the world stress its importance in achieving the best results. It will be recommended by your surgeon and you will have between 8 and 10 treatments. The treatment is performed by a registered nurse at Sydney Plastic Surgeons.

RESULTS OF YOUR SURGERY

Since the healing process is gradual, you should expect to wait at least several weeks to get an accurate picture of the results of your operation. Incisions will fade over a number of months until they become barely visible.

WHEN CAN I RESUME MY NORMAL ACTIVITIES?

Walking and normal daily activities should be possible very soon after surgery. You should be able to return to work in just a few days. In most cases, you should be able to resume all your normal activities within a week or two.

RISKS AND POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF LIPOSCULPTURE

Fortunately significant complications from liposculpture are infrequent. Every year, many thousands of operations are performed with no major problems and good results. However, everyone considering surgery should be aware of both the benefits and risks. The subject of risks and potential complications of surgery is best

discussed on a personal basis between you and your plastic surgeon

- Irregular contours are the most common problem seen after liposculpture.
- Bruising and swelling can last up to three weeks or longer in some cases.
- Postoperative bleeding, which can result in a collection of blood, is infrequent but if serious, may necessitate returned to the operating theatre for evacuation.
- Blood clots in the leg veins are an uncommon complication of this surgery but may be serious because of the potential risk of blood clots travelling to the lungs.
- An area of skin loss is an extremely rare complication but has been reported in the surgical literature.
- Infection can also occur and depending on severity, antibiotics by mouth or intravenously may be prescribed.
- Skin burns can be seen with the use of ultrasound probes, although these are very uncommon with modern instrumentation.

You can help to minimise certain risks by following the advice and instructions of your plastic surgeon, both before and after your surgery.

MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON

Should there be any questions regarding liposculpture be sure they are answered in advance. Well meaning friends are not a good source of information. Find out everything before proceeding with the operation - a well informed patient is a happy one.

After surgery you will return to your plastic surgeon's office for follow-up care at prescribed intervals, at which time your progress can be evaluated. Once the immediate postoperative follow-up is complete, many surgeons encourage their patients to come back for periodic check-ups to observe and discuss the long-term results of surgery.

Please remember that the relationship with your plastic surgeon does not end when you leave

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the operating room. If you have questions or concerns during your recovery, or need additional information at a later time, you should contact your surgeon.

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