



Liposuction - patient information guide

Liposuction is a procedure that can slim and reshape parts of the body, and is one of the most popular cosmetic procedures worldwide.

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1. Introduction

For patients thinking about liposuction, it is important to remember that this treatment is not a cure, but can help to correct and improve bodily contours in areas that are resistant to weight loss.

As a surgical technique, liposuction works by removing pockets of fat in areas that are beyond the reach of diet and exercise. It is most effective for people who are near normal weight and have firm, elastic skin. It should not be thought of as a substitute for losing weight. The areas that are most commonly treated by liposuction are:

- Tummy
- Hips
- Buttocks
- Thighs
- Knees
- Neck
- Upper arms
- Male breasts

Liposuction is carried out using a thin, hollow tube called a cannula that is inserted through the skin through tiny incisions. The cannula is then used to loosen the fat and create a nicer shape within the body part being treated. A special vacuum or suction device is attached to the cannula, and the fat is sucked from the body, with any incisions being sewn up at the end of the operation. The procedure takes between one to three hours to perform, depending on the size of the treatment area(s).

Various kinds of anaesthetic can be used and the decision on which is best depends upon your preference, along with the size of the areas to be treated. In most cases, patients will only need to be in hospital for a few hours, but an overnight stay may be recommended if a large amount of fat is to be removed.

There are various liposuction techniques available, but no single technique works for all patients. Each liposuction procedure will be tailored to a patient's needs and physical condition. At the end of the operation, tight bandages or elasticated clothing will be applied to the area to minimise swelling and help the body conform to its new shape. With the exception of showering, this garment should be worn both day and night for at least two weeks and thereafter for another four to six weeks.

Complications are infrequent, although there can be considerable pain following this procedure, particularly if a large amount of fat has been removed. The following are commonly experienced by patients:

- Stiffness and pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Numbness
- Unusual sensations
- Fine thread veins
- Lumpy appearance as remaining fat settles

If a small amount of fat is removed during an operation, patients should be able to return to work within a day or two. However, you may need extra time off if the liposuction was more extensive. Patients can usually return to their usual routines within three to four weeks. The effects of the operation should be long-lasting, so long as a patient's weight remains stable.

2. Where should I go for more information and support?

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