

ADVANCED DERMATOLOGY CARE

LIPOSUCTION SURGERY BODY CONTOURING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions are most frequently asked regarding liposuction surgery. Not all of them can be answered specifically, and some may not apply to you. Therefore, specific questions that you might have should be addressed directly to the physician.

Q: Can both males and females be treated with this technique?

A: Suction fat removal has successfully removed localized accumulation in both male and female patients, both young and old.

Q: Is the procedure painful?

A: You are given local and/or oral anesthesia, which helps with the discomfort. There is some discomfort with the administration of the local anesthetic. There may be some pressure sensation but, overall, the administration of the anesthetic and the procedure is usually well tolerated. The pain after surgery can usually be controlled by a mild analgesic such as Tylenol. Surprisingly little discomfort occurs because very few nerves are damaged, since they are protected by the blunt tip of the cannula.

Q: How long will the patient be off work?

A: Usually, the patient will need to take off two days to one week from work after surgery, depending on the extent of surgery, the area treated, the individual's pain tolerance, and the type of work the individual does.

Q: Where will the incisions be made and how long will they be?

A: The locations of the incisions depend on the areas to be treated. They are usually placed in skin folds or areas covered by clothing. Generally, the incisions are less than ¼-inch long. They will be pointed out to the patient at the initial consultation and drawn with a pen on each patient prior to surgery.

Q: How many pounds can be taken off?

A: Weight loss may be minimal because fat weighs very little. You will lose inches and look and feel more slender.

Q: What will happen to any excess skin?

A: If a large amount of excess skin is present, it can be surgically excised. This is rarely necessary, however, and most patients who are undergoing liposuction are trying to avoid this possibility. The skin is a dynamic organ whose elasticity enables it to adjust to the new body contour with the help of elastic garments and tape.

Q: Will I be bruised?

A: Usually, but not always. In most cases, some bruising occurs around the areas where the liposuction is performed.

Q: Will the fat grow back?

A: Fat cells are developed during childhood and puberty. Some theorists say that new fat cells develop after puberty. This is not a proven fact. We feel that the fat cells either swell or shrink with weight gain or loss. When these fat cells are removed from the treated sites, they will not re-form. However, individuals who abuse their diet may gain weight throughout their body. This could cause the existing fat cells to enlarge and the results of the surgery may be lost. The redistribution of fat has included noticeable breast enlargement in some people. However, in general, the deposits do not re-accumulate.

Q: How long will I be wearing bandages?

A: In small cases, only three days to a week. In this office, elastic bandages will be used in most cases, and they will remain in place for one week. When the liposuction is performed on the abdomen, a binder is placed around the waist to hold the tissues firmly in place for several days. It is needed for comfort for up to three weeks.

Q: What are the complications? What could possibly go wrong?

A: Undesirable side effects of liposuction surgery include scarring from the small incisions, bleeding, bruising, swelling and discomfort or soreness in the area where the surgery has been done. These side effects occur to a certain extent in almost every case. Other side effects of the operation occur with variable frequency. These include removal of too little or too much fat in certain areas, dimpling or wrinkling of the skin, a certain amount of numbness, and prolonged discoloration of the skin. Very rarely, excessive bleeding at the time of surgery may cause trapped blood to accumulate under the skin (hematoma), which appears as a swelling that may need to be drained. A chance for infection also exists.

Q: I am overweight and have multiple localized deposits of fat. Am I a greater risk?

A: Patients who are overweight must be willing to accept a greater possibility of contour irregularities and poor skin redraping in exchange for a better look in clothing.

Q: I am an older patient and have lost some of my skin elasticity. Will this procedure help me?

A: Age is not a limitation on treatment with liposuction. Less than maximum results are expected, however, in anyone who has poor skin elasticity.

Q: Just what is cellulite and how is it helped by liposuction?

A: "Cellulite" has no precise medical meaning. Most people use the word to refer to dimpling and irregularities that occur on the surface of the skin. It is seen most frequently associated with loose skin. Cellulite fat cells differ little from fat cells elsewhere in the body, although there is evidence that their metabolism is different. Consequently, this fat is generally unresponsive to a weight loss program that includes diet and exercise. The affected areas can look worse after weight reduction than before. Liposuction does not remove the appearance of cellulite.

Q: Can a procedure be repeated?

A: More than one surgical suction removal may be necessary in order to treat some areas. When more than one surgical site is being treated, it may be necessary to have more than one operation performed.

Q: When can I bathe after surgery?

A: Patients may sponge bathe within twenty-four hours after surgery. Normal bathing may be resumed as soon as the bandages are removed. Hot bath are discouraged for a month, because they may aggravate swelling.

Q: Is sun bathing before and after surgery permitted?

A: A sunburn prior to surgery would make a patient extremely uncomfortable, and it would interfere with the bandaging that must be performed. After surgery, too much sun bathing may raise the body temperature and increase the possibility of swelling.

Q: What about drinking, smoking, and taking medicines?

A: Generally, a person may resume taking the prescribed medications the same day of surgery. It is best for you not to consume alcoholic beverages for several days before or after surgery. You should avoid taking aspirin, aspirin containing products, other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin, etc.) or naprosyn (Alleve, Naproxen, etc.). These medications can cause more bleeding and make surgery more difficult and your recuperating period longer. Smoking is not recommended for at least weeks before and one month after surgery to allow proper healing of the tissues.

Q: When can I return to exercising?

A: Generally, no vigorous exercise is allowed for seven days after small surgical procedures. After more complex procedures, exercise will be strictly forbidden for up to three weeks or more.

Q: What about sexual activities?

A: The resumption of sexual activity depends on the areas affected by surgery, the extent of surgery, the needs of individual patient, and the type of sexual activity.

Q: Must I have laboratory tests, X-rays or a physical examination?

A: Generally, the patient's medical history is reviewed and the heart, lungs, and blood pressure are examined. A blood test is required for every patient. Further tests and examinations such as an X-ray, EKG, urinalysis, etc., may be needed in some cases.

Q: Are pictures taken before and after surgery?

A: Photographs are taken before surgery in every case, but they do not generally show the patient's face. Photos document the surgery so that further study can be made of what has been accomplished.

Q: Do you have EKG monitors, blood pressure monitors, and pulse monitors during the operation?

A: Only if there is intravenous sedation.

Q: Do you have an IV running during the operation?

A: Only if a large number of areas are treated. This allows us to supply the fluids that are needed to replace the fat and liquids that are removed, and to allow easy administration of any medications that are needed during the procedure.