

## ***Liposuction*** (page 1 of 3)



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Author: Sarah Godwin  
Role: Plastic Surgery Nurse  
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Liposuction, also known as liposculpture or suction assisted lipectomy, is a technique to remove unwanted fat deposits. The unsightly distribution of body fat is usually due to an inborn tendency to deposit fat in one particular area of the body, most commonly the hips. Other areas include; the neck, arms, tummy, loins, thighs, inner side of the knees and the ankles. The growth of a benign fat tumour (lipoma) can also be a disfigurement, and in men fatty swellings can develop under the nipples to look like breasts (gynaecomastia).

Liposuction can also be used to harvest fat for fat grafting.

### **What can be done?**

If you have an deposit of fat in one place it is possible to reduce its bulk by an operation called Liposuction. A narrow metal tube is inserted through a small incision in the nearby skin. It is attached to a strong vacuum pump which is drawn back and forth within the area of excess fat. The process removes tunnels of fat leaving the small blood vessels and nerves intact. The skin will then retract.

### **What are the complications?**

#### **Bruising**

You can expect considerable bruising which will be uncomfortable and at times painful. The larger the area treated the greater this will be. Some people bruise more easily than others. The discoloration of this bruising will usually last for about a month, but the lumpiness and swelling of deep bruising can take up to six months to disappear, particularly when the abdomen or ankles have been treated.

#### **Swelling**

As swelling can take a long time to settle you may not see the full benefit of the operation for up to six months. Rarely, a greyish stripe can discolour the skin for several months and is more commonly seen when the ankles have been treated. If you have a tendency to be anaemic, or if you were to have a large area treated, you may need to take iron tablets for a month. You can expect some numbness in the treated skin which lasts for several months.

#### **Scars**

You will have small scars approximately 1cm long where the cannula is put into the skin. There is a small risk in some people that these scars may stay

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red for a while but the surgeon will try and choose less obvious areas.

If you are having treatment to your legs you may find that your ankles are swollen for a few weeks and if your ankles themselves have been treated they may stay swollen for a few months.

## **Infection**

Infection after liposuction is vary rare but sometimes there may be some redness around the wounds. This can easily be treated with antibiotics.

## **Thrombophlebitis**

This is an inflammation of the veins and not the same as thrombosis. It can occur around the inside of the knee and inner part of the upper thigh when these areas have been treated. It gradually settles over a period of weeks.

## **Will it last?**

Fat cells are thought not to be regenerated in adult life, therefore removing them will give a permanent change in contour and be independent of any changes in your body weight.

## **What are the limitations?**

In certain situations the skin is not stretchy but loose. Liposuction in these areas will then mean that the skin does not retract and it may be recommended that the excess skin is removed, either at the same time as the liposuction, or as a second procedure. This is most likely in the abdomen, after pregnancy or weight loss, the buttocks or the neck.

Dimples and wrinkles of the skin, sometimes called cellulite will not be improved by liposuction.

## **Pre-operative assessment**

You may be asked to attend a pre-operative assessment appointment where a nurse will explain the operation to you and answer any questions you may have. A detailed medical history will be taken from you, photographs taken and some tests may be done (appropriate to your age and your medical history) including:

- blood tests
- MRSA swabs
- ECG (heart tracing).

## **On the day of surgery**

You will be admitted to the Surgical Admissions Lounge on the day of your operation. Before going to theatre, you will see an anaesthetist who will discuss your anaesthetic with you and a doctor who will ask you to sign a consent form. Before signing this, the doctor will explain what is going to happen. Please ask questions if you are not sure or do not understand something.

You will be transferred from the Surgical Admissions Lounge to the operating theatre.

## Returning to the ward

When you return from theatre you will be transferred to a ward. Your wounds will be monitored for any bleeding or excess swelling. You will be given pain killers to keep you comfortable. Please tell the nurses if you have any pain.

## Discharge home

You will probably go home on the day of your surgery although some people may stay in hospital for one night.

The nurses will tell you how to look after yourself when you get home. Depending on the location of your wounds, you may be advised to wear a pressure garment for up to six weeks. This should only be removed for washing and put back on afterwards.

## Returning to normal activity

Depending on the size and location of the liposuction, you may be advised not to return to work for up to four weeks. The nurses will give you more information about this. Please ask for a Fitness to Work Note if you need one.

## Follow up

You will be asked to return to the outpatient department a week to ten days after your discharge home. Your wounds will be checked at this appointment. Further follow up appointments will be given to you.

## Contact

Please contact the Plastic and Burns Unit on 01722 336262 ext 3507 or Plastic Outpatient Department on 01722 336262 ext 3254 if you have any queries or problems with your wounds after your discharge home.

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