

LIPOSUCTION

Liposuction is a surgical technique to remove unwanted deposits of fat from specific areas of the body including under the chin, the upper arms, the trunk, the abdomen, the buttock, the hips and thighs, the knees and occasionally the calves and ankles. This is not a substitute for weight reduction, but a method for removing localised deposits of fatty tissue that do not respond to either diet or exercise. Liposuction may be performed as a primary procedure for body contouring or maybe combined with other surgical techniques such as a facelift, an abdominoplasty or thighs lift. In these combined procedures the idea is that the excess loose skin and supporting structures are tightened.

The best candidates for liposuction are individuals of relatively normal weight who have excess fat in a particular body area. Having firm elastic skin will result in a better final contour after liposuction. Hanging skin will not reshape itself to the new contours and may require additional surgical techniques to remove and tighten the excess skin. Body contour irregularity due to structures other than fat cannot be improved by this technique. Liposuction itself will not improve areas of dimpled skin know as cellulite.

Suction Assisted Liposuction (S.A.L.) surgery is performed by using a hollow metal rod known as a cannula that is inserted through a small skin incision and is passed back and forth through the area of fatty deposition. The cannula is attached to a vacuum pump which provides the suction needed to remove the fatty tissue.

In some situations a special cannula maybe used that emits ultrasonic energy to breakdown the fatty deposits. This technique is known as **Ultrasound Assisted Liposuction (U.A.L.)**. Depending on your needs, we will recommend either suction assisted liposuction alone or in combination with ultrasound assisted liposuction.

There are a variety of different techniques used by Plastic Surgeons for liposuction. Liposuction may be performed under local or general anaesthesia. **Tumescent liposuction** technique involves the infiltration of fluid containing dilute local anaesthetic and adrenaline (to help prevent bleeding) into areas of fatty deposits. This technique can reduce discomfort at the time of surgery as well as reduce post-operative bruising. We always undertake tumescent liposuction.

Support garments and dressings are worn to control swelling to and to promote healing for a minimum of three weeks after surgery. Blood transfusion is very rarely required unless large volumes of fat are being removed and we would discuss this likelihood with you should it be indicated.

Alternative Treatment

Alternative forms of management consist of not treating the areas of fatty deposits. Diet and exercise regimes may be of benefit in the overall reduction of excess body fat. Direct removal of excess skin and fatty tissue may be necessary in addition to liposuction in some patients.

The Risks of Liposuction Surgery

Every surgical procedure involves a certain amount of risk and it is important that you understand the risks involved with liposuction. The final decision an individual makes to undergo a surgical procedure should be based on the balance of risk compared to the potential benefit. Although the majority of patients do not experience complications if after having read this information sheet you have any queries, then you should discuss these with myself in order to make sure that you understand the risks, the potential complications and the consequences of liposuction before we operate.

Who are the best candidates for UAL? (Ultrasound Assisted Liposuction)

Tendency to deposit fat in certain areas of the body is genetically influenced. People have different distributions of excess fat, however fat cannot be deposited if excess food is not eaten and the calories consumed do not exceed the calories needed for energy. To

obtain the best results for liposuction you must balance your activities and exercise level with your calorie intake. Plastic Surgery of any kind is not a substitute for dieting and exercise, but it will enhance your efforts. You must remember that any surgical result can be quickly undone by a failure to maintain appropriate diet and exercise regimes. The best candidates for liposuction are generally those people who are of almost normal weight with firm elastic skin, who have pockets of excess fat in particular areas. Patients should be physically healthy, psychologically stable and realistic in their expectations. Age is not usually a criterion, but older patients tend to have diminished skin elasticity and may not achieve as good a result as a younger patient. Liposuction of any type is not recommended for individuals with heart or lung disease, poor blood circulation or patients who have recently had surgery near the area to be liposuctioned.

Liposuction can enhance your appearance and your self-confidence but it may not change your looks to match your idealised concept, nor will it cause people to react differently to you. Before deciding on liposuction think carefully about your expectations and discuss them with our staff. The four crucial elements in establishing a healthy, stable appearance are a change in lifestyle, good diet, and appropriate exercise with the ‘aid’ of body contouring.

What is Ultrasound Assisted Liposuction?

Each individual has a set number of fat cells, unless you are grossly obese, in which case you will have an increased number of fat cells. Whether you are fat or thin depends upon the amount of fat in each cell and by destroying some fat cells there will be fewer cells to be fat or thin. There will be a permanent change in the proportions of your body. Fat cells can be destroyed by physical force, such as a blunt cannula or by ultrasound assisted liposuction which is a new technique which uses high frequency sound waves to destroy the fat cell walls by a pressure effect and liquefy the contents. Low-pressure suction is used to draw the fat from the body through a tube. Because UAL requires less physical force than traditional liposuction this technique may result in less blood loss and less post-operative bruising. It is not a substitute for traditional liposuction but UAL is useful for contouring body areas that are fibrous or require extra precision. UAL may also

permit larger volumes of fat to be removed in a single procedure and is particularly indicated in redo or touch up procedures.

What is cellulite?

Cellulite is a term used to describe a specific look of fat in skin overlying certain areas of the body. As people age almost all develop some areas of cellulite. Cellulite is not a different type of skin but rather a specific look that reflects the architecture of the fat and skin in these areas. UAL will produce some improvement in dimpling, or cellulite however at this time there is no cure for cellulite and the best results are achieved through proper diet and exercising in combination with liposuction.

What is skin contraction?

When a person loses weight through dieting and exercise the skin will usually contract gradually over the period of weight loss. This is the same as skin contracting after a pregnancy. However, skin contraction is not always smooth. Many people who have undergone significant weight loss will often have stretch marks or loose skin, these changes can also occur with UAL. Immediately after liposuction the skin overlying the area where fat has been removed is loose but over the next several hours this area will swell significantly and the skin may actually stretch. This swelling slowly disappears over the next few weeks and the skin will usually contract as the swelling resolves. Also irregularities in the microscopic blood flow to the remaining fat can result in further areas of fat atrophy. The larger the amount of fat removed the greater the amount of variation and skin irregularities. As the body heals these irregularities will lessen. This process can be helped by massage and external ultrasound therapy.

Are there any risks or complications associated with UAL?

As with traditional liposuction serious medical complications are infrequent. Most of the serious complications which have been reported have resulted from either overzealous infiltration of fluid in tumescent techniques or removing excessively large amounts of fat without post-operative resuscitation. Infection and the temporary collection of fluid beneath the skin surface (seroma) are possible and unless the skin is protected burn injury

can occur. Slightly longer incisions are needed with UAL compared with traditional liposuction and this requires that the incisions be placed carefully in areas where they will not be noticeable. For this reason we will sometimes use traditional liposuction only in areas where an obvious scar may result.

Cosmetic complications from all types of liposuction include irregularities of the skin surface, areas of uneven pigmentation, bagginess of the skin and asymmetry. Cosmetic problems relating to excess skin can be treated with excisional body contouring techniques e.g. tummy tuck surgery.

What treatment is best for me?

At your initial consultation we will evaluate your general health, identify the areas of fat deposits to be treated and assess the condition of your skin. We will explain to you the body contouring methods that may be most appropriate for you. For instance it may be that a tummy tuck would be more effective or that a combination of liposuction, ultrasonic assisted liposuction may be the best choice. It is important that you be frank with me in your expectations. Be sure to tell me about any significant weight loss or gains that you have experienced and also remember that no detail in your past medical history is unimportant. If you have trouble remembering the name of tablets that you take then may I suggest that you write a list before coming for consultation.

How should I prepare for surgery?

We will give you specific instructions on how to prepare. In the longer term we can advise you on eating, drinking and smoking and exercise regimes. It is important to get a degree of self-control and discipline before surgery. It is important to avoid any aspirin or aspirin-containing products for at least two weeks before surgery. If you develop any kind of skin infection your procedure will have to be postponed. Your final result will depend as much on what you do before surgery, as what I do in the operating room.

Where will the surgery be performed?

Liposuction is performed in an operating theatre here at the Stamford Hospital. It is usually performed on a daycase basis for cost containment and convenience, but if large volumes of fat are removed then we would advise that you stay in overnight for observation and resuscitation. Secondary touch up procedures can be done under local anaesthetic, however most liposuction is done under general anaesthesia as a daycase or a one night stay.

What does the procedure involve?

Before surgery the areas to be treated will be carefully marked out. Time required to perform UAL may vary considerably depending on the surgical plan. However, UAL may take a little longer than traditional liposuction because of the extra step involved in fat liquefaction. First fluid is injected into the area of fat, which contains local anaesthetic and a substance to try and stop bleeding. Then a metal cannula connected to an ultrasound generator is inserted beneath the skin through a small incision. The ultrasound energy causes the walls of the fat cells to break down allowing the fat to flow out of the cells. The liquefied fat combines with the injected fluid to create an emulsion which is removed from the body by vacuum pressure. If you are given a local anaesthetic at this stage you may feel some warmth and vibration during the procedure. Typically only a small amount of blood is lost during ultrasonic liposuction.

What can I expect immediately after surgery?

You will likely have some fluid drainage from the incisions. If your surgery was concentrated on the abdomen a drainage tube may be inserted beneath the skin to prevent fluid build up. You will be fitted with a snug elastic bandage or compression garment to wear over the treated area to help control swelling. You may need to wear this for up to four weeks to help you skin to shrink and fit its new contour. However the UAL procedure itself may also tighten the skin by causing scar formation within the remaining fat. The compressive garment can be changed three days after surgery, but a garment must be worn at all times for two weeks and after that a compressive garment must be worn at night for at least two more weeks. The side effects of traditional liposuction include pain, burning, swelling, bleeding and temporary numbness. The pain can be

controlled with medication prescribed by the Hospital. You may well however feel stiff and sore for a few days. It is normal to feel a bit depressed in the days or weeks following surgery but this feeling will subside as you begin to look and feel better.

How long will it take for me to get back to normal?

Healing is a gradual process. We advise you to start walking as soon as possible to help prevent blood clots forming in your leg veins. You will begin to feel better after about a week and you should be back at work within two weeks after surgery. The stitches are usually removed within the first ten days. Strenuous activity should be avoided for about three weeks until your body completely heals although most of the bruising and swelling usually disappears within six weeks. Some swelling will persist for as long as six months. We will schedule follow up visits to monitor your progress and see if any additional procedures are needed at any time.

How long will it take before my new contour is final?

You will see a noticeable difference in the shape of your body quite soon after surgery. However, improvement will become even more apparent after about three weeks when most of the swelling has subsided. After about three months any persistent mild swelling will resolve and the final contour will be apparent. If your expectations are realistic you will be pleased with the results. You may find that your clothes fit more comfortably and you are more at ease with your body image. By eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise you can maintain your new shape permanently.

Risks of liposuction surgery

Liposuction is the most commonly performed surgical procedure in the United States. Every surgical procedure involves a certain amount of risk but as in any surgical procedure before deciding it is important to weigh the risks against the potential benefits. The vast majority of patients undergo liposuction with no complications, however listed below are some of the described possible complications.

1. Patient selection

Individuals with poor skin tone, medical problems, obesity or unrealistic expectations may not be good candidates for liposuction.

2. Bleeding

During or after surgery, particularly if aspirin or anti-inflammatory medication have been taken seven days before surgery. Using tumescent techniques and being sensible about the amount of fat removed in one treatment, blood transfusion has never been required here at the Stamford for liposuction.

3. Infection

Infection is unusual after this type of surgery. Should it occur, it should respond to antibiotics.

4. Scarring

Although good wound healing after a surgical procedure is expected, abnormal scars may occur within the skin and deeper tissues. In rarer cases abnormal scars may result which may be unattractive or a different colour from the surrounding skin. In general the scars of liposuction are never a problem as they are so small.

5. Changes in skin sensation

A temporary decrease in skin sensation after liposuction may occur. This usually resolves over a period of time. In very occasional cases a full return of normal sensation does not totally resolve.

6. Skin discoloration/swelling

Skin discoloration (bruising) normally occurs following liposuction. Rare situations, swelling and skin discoloration may persist for a long period of time. Permanent skin discoloration is rare.

7. Skin contour irregularities

Contour irregularities and depressions in the skin may occur after liposuction. Visible and palpable wrinkling of the skin can also occur. Additional treatments including surgery may be necessary to treat skin contour irregularities following liposuction.

8. Symmetry

It may not be possible to achieve symmetric body appearance from liposuction surgery. Factors such as skin tone, body features, bony prominences and muscle tone may contribute to normal asymmetry.

9. Seroma

Fluid accumulation infrequently occurs in the areas where liposuction has been performed. Additional treatments including aspiration of the fluid may be necessary.

10. Long term affects

Subsequent alterations in body contour may occur as the result of ageing, weight loss or gain, pregnancy or other circumstances not related to liposuction.

11. Tumescant liposuction

There is the possibility that large volumes of fluid containing dilute local anaesthetic and adrenaline that is injected into fatty deposits during surgery may contribute to fluid overload. We are conservative in the amount of fluid that is used as we do not undertake liposuction of large areas in one operative procedure. Your operation will be monitored constantly by a Consultant Anaesthetist.

12. Pain

You should be aware that the larger the amount of fat that is removed the more likely that some of the above complications may occur. It may be necessary to perform additional surgery from time to time to improve your results. This may only be evident after about six months after surgery when most of the swelling has resolved. It is important to understand that the scarring underneath the skin should be allowed to mature and soften

before any secondary procedure is undertaken. Usually a minimum of one year is left before undertaking a secondary procedure.

Chronic pain and discomfort following liposuction is rare but does sometimes occur, presumably due to scarring under the skin.

If there are any problems or anxieties post-operatively, please get in touch with the HealthXchange Clinic on 01481 736699 or out of office hours Dr J G Curran on 01481 265797 or mobile 07781 165797.