

How Does
It Work?

Liposuction

by Kenneth M. Rose, M.D.

Liposuction is an effective method to remove unwanted fat from people of a healthy weight. It is a refining technique that can be used almost anywhere on the body but is most frequently applied to smooth out problem areas such as the saddlebags on the outer thighs, love handles on the flanks or spare tire around the belly.

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These days, one of the most common forms of liposuction is the tumescent technique. This usually involves mild sedation with local anesthesia in the office operating room.

The patient is marked preoperatively with a special pen to indicate the areas of fat that must be removed. Once the anesthesia has set in, the surgeon injects fluid into the fat that helps numb the area and reduce bleeding. He or she then makes small incisions, one inch or less, in body creases to hide the scars. Finally, the doctor inserts a long, thin tube to suction out the fat, much like a vacuum cleaner. (Moving the tube back and forth breaks apart the fat, which goes into a plastic bottle.)

At the conclusion of the procedure, the surgeon places absorbable sutures in the wounds and applies a compression garment. The recovery time is usually quite rapid, comparatively speaking. Overall, most people may return to their daily routines in a few days, though it can take a few weeks to get completely back to normal.

FAQS

A frequent question patients ask is, **“What happens if I gain weight after the surgery? Where will the fat go?”** Overall, the new fat will be more apparent in other areas of the body. The operated area will also get bigger, just less so. This is because in most people fat cells do not multiply. They only get bigger when



you gain weight or smaller when you lose it. After liposuction, the operated area has fewer fat cells than before, so there's less growth.

Another frequent question is, **“I need to lose weight in a hurry; will liposuction help?”** Liposuction is a refining technique that is best used to remove localized pockets of fat. Therefore, it's not a substitute for diet and exercise. There's also a limit to the amount of fat a surgeon can remove during one operation. As such, liposuction is not an appropriate procedure for overweight people.

One last point of confusion is the “poochy” belly women sometimes acquire after childbirth. This condition is usually due to the stretching of abdominal skin and muscles, not to weight gain. Liposuction is usually

not helpful in treating this problem. A tummy tuck, which would eliminate the excess skin and tighten the stomach wall, would be a better treatment choice.

In my opinion, liposuction is a great way to regain the shape you once had. It is effective, usually has a short recovery time and is relatively safe for most healthy people, though all surgeries carry risks. Be sure to find someone well-trained in the procedure, and ask questions as you would of any surgeon.

KENNETH M. ROSE, M.D., is a board-certified plastic surgeon in private practice in Manhattan.