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## **Fastest Growing Surgery Leads To Dangerous Unforeseen Side Effect: Skin**

### ***Many Patients Unaware Stomach-Shrinking May Necessitate Body-Lift Surgery***

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**New York, NY January 27, 2003** - Bariatric surgery is the fastest growing surgery in America, according to the Associated Press, with more than 75,000 performed in 2002. But is there a dangerous side effect that patients are often not aware of? Patients who lose one hundred pounds or more thanks to lap bands, stomach stapling and other bariatric procedures are often replacing the risk of obesity with the risk of an abundance of loose skin.

**“The hazards associated with vast amounts of baggy skin are real and serious,” according to Dr. Zachary Gerut, one of metro New York’s leading reconstructive surgeons. “Patients experience intense pain and stretching from the sheer weight of the skin, and multiple rashes form in and around the stomach, breasts and rectum.”**

### **UNAWARE AND UNPREDICTABLE**

Dr. Gerut believes patients are not being made fully aware of the dangers when they go in for a stomach shrinking procedure. “There are many factors that go into whether or not a person’s skin is going to shrink along with their insides – age, how long the patient has been obese, the amount of weight they eventually lose, how fast they lose it, etc.,” he says. “This is a brand-new group of patients as far as numbers go and because no one can predict who will be affected, it seems many doctors don’t discuss it with their patients at all.”

If a patient does find that their skin has not kept up, Dr. Gerut says to make sure the plastic and reconstructive surgeon they go to has experience in what he terms the “body lift” procedure. “This is not the type of situation where a surgeon can just perform a tummy tuck or a breast lift and call it a day,” continues Dr. Gerut, who is one of a handful of surgeons in the New York area specifically trained in this procedure. “Unlike a tuck or a lift, post-bariatric excess skin is a three dimensional problem. Those who just have tummy tucks, when they’re done, look like they still need a tuck.”

### **THE PROCEDURE**

Dr. Gerut addresses the problem both vertically and horizontally, and from both the front and back of the patient. When addressing the stomach, he pulls the skin downward toward the pelvis and inward from the sides. In the back, he does a similar procedure but in the opposite direction, pulling the skin upward and (outward)(inward) [please confirm which is correct].

He then uses the fatty tissue from the excess skin he has just removed to rebuild the buttocks and the breasts, when appropriate. It’s also important for surgeons to plan ahead

when addressing this amount of excess skin because what they do on one part of the body will effect how they work on another.

“The immediate postoperative period is very critical because... [fill in information],” says Dr. Gerut. “Activity is slowly advanced over the next few days, and most patients are back to their daily activities in four weeks. When the final results are evident, there is a considerable improvement in truncal contour: the abdomen is flatter, the waist has better definition, the back rolls are greatly improved and the buttocks are smaller and better shaped.”

## **MENTAL IMPACT**

In addition to health concerns, if individuals lose more than a hundred pounds and don't look as good as they feel, Dr. Gerut says it is mentally discouraging. “They are proud of their weight loss but are often still dismayed about their appearance,” he says. “Such a situation can result in depression and lead a person back to the eating habits that caused serious weight-gain in the first place. A properly done body lift allows them to achieve the contours they were originally seeking and motivate them to take care of their bodies and keep the weight off.”

Dr. Gerut emphasizes that if a person is dangerously obese, losing the weight should be his or her primary concern. “But once a person is out of the danger zone and his or her weight is stabilized, it's important to go the last mile and get rid of the excess skin that may be hazardous to someone both physically and mentally.”

Other points Dr. Gerut notes:

- Patients will experience scarring, but they will fade over time and usually be almost invisible in 18 to 24 months.
- Because loose skin poses such a grave danger, 55 to 75% of his patients' body lift surgeries are covered by insurance.

Outside of surgery, there is no other way for a person to tighten their skin.

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