

## Suction-assisted liposculpture (SAL or liposuction)

Liposuction or suction assisted liposculpture as I prefer to call it, involves the targeted removal of 'stubborn' areas of fat accumulation that do not respond to exercise and a healthy diet. Its main aim therefore, is to sculpt and improve contour and shape.

Common areas for liposuction include the waist (love handles), the abdomen, the hips (saddle bags) and the thighs. Other areas in which SAL may be used include the buttocks, the chin, neck, knees, back and arms.

In addition, SAL can be used

1. to refine the waistline following a tummy tuck (abdominoplasty).
2. to improve breast symmetry following breast reduction or reconstruction.
3. for the treatment of gynaecomastia (fatty enlargement of male breasts) either alone or as an adjunct to surgical excision.
4. For the removal of localized benign fatty accumulation under the skin (Lipoma)

### How is the operation performed?

The operation is usually carried out under a general anaesthetic. It can be performed under a local anaesthetic for small areas.

I will treat small and moderate areas as daycases whereas I advise an overnight stay for large and multiple areas.

The duration of surgery depends on the number of areas and the volume of fat to be removed. This usually varies between 1-3 hours.

Tiny incisions are made close to the area to be liposculptured and a rigid narrow tube, which is attached to a suction device, is passed underneath the skin. Using to and fro movements, the rigid tube is used to break down fat, which is then sucked out by the vacuum. Ultrasound and high frequency can be used to help with the breakdown of fat.

### What is the postoperative care and recovery?

You may have straw-coloured fluid oozing from the wounds. Do not be alarmed, this is common in the first few days after your operation. Padding over the areas to absorb the fluid is all that is required.

Initially, there will be bruising and swelling in the area(s) liposuctioned (this may last 2-4 weeks).

These notes are intended to be used with your consultation

You will need to wear a supportive pressure garment for 6-weeks following the surgery to ensure there is compression, thereby helping retraction and re-draping of skin at the sites of fat removal. However it may take up to six months for you to see the full benefit of the operation. Skin retraction and re-draping occurs better in the youthful toned skin

You should be able to return to work at 1-2 weeks following surgery, but may need longer if large areas have been treated.

I encourage you to gently walk about after the operation but vigorous and strenuous exercise is better avoided in the first four weeks.

### **What are the risks?**

On the whole liposuction is a satisfying operation with rare significant long-term complications.

Severe bruising and swelling which take longer to resolve can occur. Rarely, there may be significant bleeding and blood accumulation in the tissues that will need to be drained.

Occasionally body fluid accumulates[seroma] within the potential space where fat has been removed. This is usually drained with a needle and syringe in the clinic.

Minor degrees of under- or over-correction and irregularities can occur in the long term. However, significant degrees of under- or over-correction and irregularities fortunately occur infrequently. I will allow at least six months before discussing any possible revisions

A very rare, but dangerous complication is the damage to internal organs by the liposuction instrument. If this were to happen, further surgery may be required to explore and repair the organs damaged. Another unusual complication is fat embolism - fat enters the blood stream and lodges at a distant site in the body. If this is in the lungs it can be extremely serious. Also Deep vein thrombosis[DVT] and Pulmonary embolism[PE] can rarely occur.

### **Did you know!**

Liposuction is the ideal solution for people who have 'fat spots'. These are, in many cases, determined genetically and do not respond to diet or exercise. It is not a weight-loss procedure. Liposuction removes the fat cells permanently but the remaining fat cells can hypertrophy (increase in size) so you still need to lead a healthy lifestyle following liposuction in order not to lose its benefit.

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