



# *Liposuction*

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COSMETIC SURGERY

## *General information*

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Liposuction is performed to remove unwanted excess fat from under the skin. The purpose of liposuction is to improve the body contour rather than to remove as much fat as possible. The best results will be obtained when specific areas of excess fat are reshaped rather than aiming for an overall thinner shape. It is not an alternative to a proper diet and exercise regime when weight loss is desired. In patients who have poor skin elasticity, wrinkling of the skin may occur after liposuction.

The operation involves a number of small cuts in the skin through which the liposuction tube is inserted. The area to be treated is first injected with local anaesthetic, adrenaline (to reduce bleeding) and saline (physiological water). The fat under the skin is then broken down and sucked up through the tube.

Liposuction can be performed to address one small specific area or for regional contouring. The areas most successfully treated are the thighs, hips, waist and tummy.

## *Preparation for surgery*

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Smoking can cause problems with wound healing and increase your risk of a chest infection following general anaesthetic. You must not smoke for at least four weeks before your operation and for four weeks after it.

Please, only take medication prescribed by your doctor for the two weeks before and two weeks after your operation. In particular, herbal, homeopathic and nutritional supplements (including vitamin E capsules) may contain substances that increase your risk of bleeding and cause sun sensitivity. These will increase your risk of complications and may affect the result of your surgery.

Aspirin, and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) increase your risk of bleeding. You should avoid all such medicines for two weeks before and two weeks after your operation. If you are concerned, please check with your GP that it is safe to do so. In certain specific circumstances, you may be prescribed a NSAID for your post-operative pain, which you should take as directed.

If you drink alcohol, it is best to drink only a small amount for the week before the operation and for the first two weeks of your recovery. You should avoid it altogether if you are taking antibiotics or strong pain medication.

Your recovery after the operation will be easier if you are fit and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Regular exercise will help you cope with the operation better.

If you feel unwell leading up to your operation please inform our secretary, as it may be best to reschedule your operation for when you are well.

Do not have surgery if you may be pregnant.

## *The operation*

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Please come for your operation in loose-fitting clothing that can be easily and comfortably removed. Slip-on shoes are best, as bending over may be uncomfortable. Avoid nail varnish and heavy make-up. Rings, ear-rings and body-piercings should be removed at home. Bring your normal medication with you and a sufficient supply for the duration of your anticipated stay in hospital. Someone should accompany you to the hospital and home when you leave hospital.

The operation is usually performed under general anaesthesia (asleep), although small isolated areas can be performed under local anaesthesia, with or without sedation. The area treated will feel sore and bruised afterwards. You should expect to be in hospital for one to two nights, depending on

the area treated (small areas can be performed as a day case). Getting up and about after the operation is important although it will be uncomfortable to start with. You should try to do this as soon as possible.

## *Care after your surgery*

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You will be given a tightly fitting compression garment to wear for a few weeks after your surgery. You must wear this at all times, day and night, except when using the bathroom.

The small incisions will be closed with a dissolving stitch and protected with a small padded dressing. You can shower over this dressing but do not soak it in a bath. The dressing should be changed at least every other day but can be changed more often if necessary.

Once the scars are entirely dry, and no longer staining the dressing, you can stop covering them. However, you may prefer to keep the scars covered with a dressing until you are no longer wearing the compression garment.

After one week you should start to moisturise the area that has been treated as well as the scars. Use any plain skin moisturiser (which can contain vitamin E if you wish) and rub the cream in with a gentle massaging motion for 5-10 minutes, three-times a day.

All scars should be protected from the sun for the first year after surgery. Ideally they should be covered with clothing. If this is not practical, then total sun block should be used and the area shaded from the sun. Sun exposure of a fresh scar can cause permanent discoloration, resulting in a darkened, visible scar.

You should avoid becoming constipated after your surgery. If you are prone to this then you must take a stool softener during your recovery.

## *What to expect after your surgery*

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A number of small scars will have been made in order to perform the liposuction. These take a few weeks to settle fully and are often red and slightly raised during the early period of healing. The area that has been treated will feel sore and tender, and it will be bruised for a few weeks after surgery. It may feel slightly lumpy, which will be helped with regular massage once it is comfortable enough to do so. There may also be numbness of the treated area, which will gradually improve over a number of months. During this time you must avoid contact with hot things, such as a hot water bottle, as there is a risk of being burned. Please take your pain medication as directed until you are able to move about comfortably.

A follow-up appointment will be arranged for you when you leave hospital.

## *Driving and activity*

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All heavy and strenuous activity should be avoided for the first few weeks after your surgery. Graduated activity and exercise can then be started with full, unrestricted activity after twelve weeks, as your comfort allows. (Your recovery will be quicker if you have had only a small area of liposuction.) You will be able to start driving again when you feel comfortable and safe doing so. This is usually between two and four weeks. Some car insurance companies have guidelines for driving after surgery and it is always best to check with your own company whether there are any restrictions imposed on you.

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## *Complications*

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Although complications are uncommon, problems may occur as a result of your surgery. These can result in prolonged recovery but may also have an adverse effect on your final result. These include poor scarring, bleeding, infection, lumpiness, delayed healing, fluid collection, persistent numbness or pain, and asymmetry or unevenness. Further surgery may be necessary to correct some of these, should they occur. A charge may have to be made for any additional treatment. There is also a small risk of developing a venous thrombosis (DVT), although measures are taken to minimise this risk.

## *Additional comments*

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If you have any questions about the information contained in this leaflet or you do not understand something that is included in it, please telephone our secretary for clarification.

If you are concerned about your recovery, have bleeding, feel unwell or have increasing pain then please contact the Clare Park Hospital where your surgery was performed, my secretary (during office hours), your local A+E Department, or your GP.

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COSMETIC SURGERY

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