

GETTING READY FOR SUMMER

LIPOSUCTION | BY DR. JEREMY Z. WILLIAMS



Liposuction is one of the most common cosmetic procedures performed in the United States, with over 300,000 procedures each year. Though liposuction has become a fairly ubiquitous option for many who desire to improve problematic areas of their body that have been refractory to diet and exercise, it still is widely misunderstood. Liposuction is simply the removal of fatty tissue from areas of the body using small incisions (usually less than 3-4 millimeters) allowing the skin to effectively “shrink wrap” around the new contour, in an effort to improve the appearance of these problematic areas. It is, in essence, a body contouring or sculpting procedure.

We are each born with a discrete number of fat cells. As we grow, these cells can enlarge (hypertrophy), but they do not replicate themselves into new fat cells like other cells in our body. As we age or experience life changes such as pregnancy, menopause, or other hormonal shifts, certain areas of fatty tissue tend to become more resistant to even our best efforts of maintaining dietary discipline and exercise. In men, these areas tend to be present in the flank or “love handle” region as well as in the abdomen. In women, these stubborn areas can exist in the abdomen, inner and outer thighs, hips, and lateral chest (bra strap region). Regardless of the area of concern, liposuction affords the opportunity to improve these problem areas through the “permanent” removal of fat cells. Though fat cells that are removed with liposuction will not return, the remaining

fat cells can potentially enlarge if a reasonable dietary and exercise regimen is not maintained. Contrary to popular belief, if liposuction is performed, fat is not “shunted” to other areas of the body. In fact, what happens, is calories that are consumed in excess continue to be stored in fat cells throughout the body. Areas that have been sculpted with liposuction have proportionally fewer fat cells than areas that have not been treated with liposuction.

There are a variety of technologies employed by plastic surgeons in an effort to make removal of fat easier. The use of fluid, ultrasound, laser, and radiofrequency all assist in “dissolving” or “melting” fat so that it may be removed. Surgeons will choose a technology depending on the area being treated and the amount of fat to be removed. Most areas can be easily and safely contoured in one to three hours, with immediate results. Swelling and bruising can be expected to varying degrees in the areas that are treated with liposuction. Swelling is controlled and eliminated through compression garments (much like a girdle) that are worn for a few weeks after surgery to assist in achieving a smooth, slim contour in areas that were previously vexed by unwanted bulges.

Ultimately, liposuction is a sculpting tool that allows clothing to fit more naturally and eliminate visible bulges that each of us are quite adept at trying to conceal. With summer fast approaching, now may be the right time to rid yourself of those problem areas or seek more information regarding what options may be best suited for you.