FDA Office of Women's Health

Liposuction

LIPOSUCTION

Lots of people want to look better. Some have an operation to change their face or body. That's called cosmetic surgery.

Some people want to get rid of fat to look better. They can have a special surgery for that. Fat is sucked from the body in a process called liposuction. Lipo means fat. Lipo is also the short term for the process.

Lipo is one of the most wanted cosmetic surgeries. It's done all over the world. People get a leaner shape by losing inches, not pounds. Lipo is not for treating weight loss.

How is lipo done?

A doctor makes small cuts in your skin and then puts tubes into the cuts. The tubes connect to a machine that sucks out fat from under your skin. You can be awake or asleep while this is going on.

What happens after it's over?

You are likely to be up and around quickly if you were awake during the surgery. If you were asleep, getting back to normal might take a few days.

You wear a girdle or "waist nipper" for a while after lipo. That helps your skin get tight again.

Where on my body can I have lipo done?

Common areas for lipo are:

- Neck
- Face
- Breasts
- Upper arms
- Stomach
- Love handles
- Calves
- Buttocks
- Back
- Hips
- Thighs
- Knees

You can have more than one area treated on the same day.

Does the fat come back?

If you eat a healthy diet and exercise, it might not. If you eat more or exercise less than you should, your fat cells will get large again. You may gain fat in areas of the body where you did not have it before.

Who should not have lipo done?

Lipo is not right for you if:

- You are not a risk taker. (See "What's the downside of lipo?" below.)
- Cost is an issue. Your health plan is not likely to cover lipo.
- You are too heavy and are trying to lose weight.
- You have a disease that would affect healing.
- You take a medicine that would affect healing.

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What else could I do about my body?

- Change your diet.
- Exercise.
- Be happy with your body as it is.
- Use clothes or makeup to cover up problem areas.

What's the downside of lipo?

Health risks. These come with any surgery. These risks are infection, swelling, and blood clots.

More surgery. Your shape might not look even after lipo. The skin may be uneven. You might need more surgery to make it look right.

You pay. Most health plans do not cover lipo. They only cover cosmetic surgery that's needed for a medical problem.

What should I do if I want to have lipo?

- Ask your regular doctor to refer you to a cosmetic surgeon. Or check with the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery for some names. Be sure to ask for doctors who are board certified in your state. This means that they have passed certain tests.
- Talk to at least two doctors.

Find out these things:

- How many times does the doctor do lipo in a year?
- How long has the doctor been doing lipo?
- What kinds of problems has the doctor had in doing lipo?
- Ask to see before-and-after photos.
- Do not let a doctor pressure you.
- Talk with people who have had lipo.
- Make sure that you know all of the risks and benefits.
- Find out exactly how much lipo will cost you.
- See if you can avoid being put to sleep during lipo. You will get better faster if you stay awake.

Report Problems to the FDA

You should report any problems you have with lipo. Contact the FDA's MedWatch Program (http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/).

To Learn More ...

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Consumer article on liposuction
http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2000/600_flab.html

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
www.fda.gov