

## Liposuction Information Sheet

Liposuction - also known as 'lipoplasty', 'liposculpture' or 'suction lipectomy' - is a procedure that can help sculpt your body by removing unwanted fat from specific areas, including the abdomen, hips, buttocks, thighs, knees, upper arms, chin, cheeks and neck. Although liposuction is not a substitute for dieting and exercise, it can remove stubborn areas of fat that do not respond to traditional weight loss methods. This information sheet is a guide for patients undergoing liposuction under the care of Mr Paul Harris.

Issues specific to you need to be discussed further and are not covered here.

### ***What should I consider before having liposuction?***

If you are planning liposuction, it is essential that you have realistic expectations about what the procedure can do for you. It is important to understand that, while liposuction can enhance your appearance and self-confidence, it won't necessarily match your ideal. So before you decide to undergo surgery, please think carefully about your expectations and discuss them with Mr Harris.

The best candidates for liposuction are normal-weight people with firm, elastic skin who have pockets of excess fat in certain areas. Age is not a major consideration; however, older patients may have diminished skin elasticity and may not achieve the same results as a younger patient with tighter skin. Liposuction does carry greater risks for individuals with chronic health problems.

### ***How do I prepare for surgery?***

Pre-operatively, no aspirin containing medicine should be taken for one week. If you smoke you should stop at least three weeks before surgery to minimise postoperative complications, which are more common in smokers. It is important that you do not start smoking again until all your wounds are fully healed.

### ***When should I stop eating or drinking before surgery?***

If your operation is in the morning, you will be asked to have nothing to eat or drink from midnight the night before. If it is in the afternoon, then you should have nothing to eat or drink from 7:00am and you should have somebody to drive you to the hospital.

### ***What will happen when I arrive at the hospital?***

You will usually be admitted on the day of surgery, and stay until the early evening. Occasionally, an overnight stay will be indicated. You will need a friend or relative to accompany you home after your stay in the hospital.

When you arrive in hospital, a nurse will talk to you about your health, and examine you to ensure you are fit for surgery. They may also arrange for you to have blood tests, a heart trace (ECG) and a chest X-ray. An anaesthetist will then visit you to discuss the anaesthetic. Mr Harris will discuss your surgery in detail with you. He may take photographs and draw markings to guide the surgery. It is important that you do not wash these lines off.

You will then be asked to sign a consent form after Mr Harris has explained the operation to you and you have had an opportunity to discuss the anaesthesia with an anaesthetist.

### ***What type of anaesthetic will be used?***

Liposuction is usually performed under a general anaesthetic, so you will sleep through the entire operation. For small areas of fat deposits, local anaesthetic may be used, with intravenous sedation, administered by an anaesthetist. Heart and lung monitoring is always carried out throughout the procedure and in the early recovery period.

### ***What takes place during the surgery?***

Localised deposits of fat are removed to contour one or more areas of the body. Through a tiny incision, a narrow tube or cannula is inserted, and used to vacuum the fat layer that lies deep beneath the skin. The cannula is moved through the fat layer, breaking up the fat cells and suctioning them out by a vacuum pump or a large syringe.

If many sites are being treated, Mr Harris will then move on to the next area, working to keep the incisions as inconspicuous as possible. As fluid is lost along with the fat, it is crucial that this fluid be replaced during the procedure to prevent shock. For this reason, patients are carefully monitored and receive intravenous fluids during and immediately after surgery.

The basic technique of liposuction, as described above, is used in all patients undergoing this procedure. However, as the procedure has been developed and refined, several variations have been introduced.

Mr Harris employs the super-wet technique for most of his patients. A medicated solution is injected into fatty areas before the fat is removed. The fluid, a mixture of intravenous salt solution, lidocaine (a local anaesthetic) and epinephrine (a drug that contracts blood vessels), allows the fat to be removed more easily, reduces blood loss and provides anaesthesia during and after surgery. This fluid injection also helps to reduce bruising after surgery. The amount of fluid inserted in this technique equals the amount of fat being removed. This technique requires IV sedation or general anaesthesia and typically takes one to two hours of surgery time.

Other techniques use more or less fluid, ultrasound, and a mechanically driven, instead of manually driven, handle

#### ***How long will the surgery take?***

The time required to perform liposuction varies considerably, depending on the size of the area, the amount of fat being removed, the type of anaesthetic and technique used.

#### ***What can I expect after my surgery?***

After surgery, you will likely experience some fluid drainage from the incisions. Occasionally, a small drainage tube may be inserted beneath the skin for a couple of days to prevent fluid build-up. To control swelling and to help your skin better fit its new contours, you may be fitted with a snug elastic garment to wear over the treated area for a few weeks. Mr Harris may also prescribe antibiotics to prevent infection.

Don't expect to look or feel great immediately after surgery. You may experience some pain, bruising, swelling, bleeding and temporary numbness. Pain can be controlled with medication, though you may still feel stiff and sore for a few days.

#### ***How much fat can you extract and how much weight will I lose?***

The maximum safe limit of fat that can be extracted during one operation is between 3 and 4 litres. In some instances, therefore, you may need a second procedure, with at least three months between the procedures.

You will lose very little weight. In fact, in the first few weeks after surgery you may notice a slight increase in weight due to water retention. The reason that you don't lose much weight is because taking out up to 3 or even 4 litres of fat (which is the safe maximum limit) is not enough for you to see a significant drop in your weight. This is because fat cells don't weigh much. On the other hand, however, depending on the treated area of course, you will notice a significant decrease in girth measurements.

#### ***How long will it take for life to return to normal?***

Healing is a gradual process. You will probably be advised to start walking as soon as possible to reduce swelling and prevent blood clots from forming in your legs. You will begin to feel better after about a week or two and you should be back at work within a few days following surgery. The stitches are removed or dissolve on their own within the first week to ten days. Strenuous activity should be avoided for about a month as your body continues to heal. Although most of the bruising and swelling disappears within three weeks, some swelling may remain for three months or more.

Mr Harris will schedule follow-up visits to monitor your progress. If you have any unusual symptoms between visits - for example, heavy bleeding or a sudden increase in pain - or any questions about what you can and cannot do, please email Mr Harris' nurse or contact the office.

#### ***How will I feel about my new look?***

You will see a noticeable difference in the shape of your body soon after surgery. However, improvement will become even more apparent after about four to six weeks, when most of the swelling has subsided. After about three months, any persistent mild swelling usually disappears and the final contour will be visible.

If your expectations are realistic, you will probably be very pleased with the results of your surgery. You may find that you are more comfortable in a wide variety of clothes and more at ease with your body. And, by eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise, you can help maintain your new shape.

***Will the fat come back?***

The short answer to this is no. Fat cells achieve their set number in any given part of the body by puberty, and thereafter only increase in volume rather than their number. If the fat cells are removed from an area by liposuction, an increased calorie intake should not lead to significantly different volume gains in the treated site compared to non-treated areas. It is important nonetheless to maintain your weight afterwards by sensible eating and regular exercise. If you do take in excess calories after surgery, you will notice all areas of your body increasing in size, including the treated areas.

***Does liposuction carry any risk?***

Liposuction is usually safe, particularly when being performed by a fully trained and accredited plastic surgeon. Although complications are rare, they can and do occur. Risks increase if a greater number of areas are treated at the same time, or if the operative sites are larger in size.

These factors can delay healing, which increases the risk of infection, the formation of fat or blood clots, excessive fluid loss, which can lead to shock or fluid accumulation that must be drained, friction burns or other damage to the skin or nerves. There is also a risk of perforation injury to the vital organs and drug reactions.

In the tumescent and super-wet techniques, the anaesthetic fluid that is injected may cause lignocaine toxicity (if the solution's lignocaine content is too high), or the collection of fluid in the lungs (if too much fluid is administered). This is of course one of the reasons for choosing a properly trained plastic surgeon with good anaesthetic support.

The scars from liposuction are small and strategically placed, to be hidden from view. However, imperfections in the final appearance are not uncommon after lipoplasty. The skin surface may be irregular, asymmetric or even "baggy," especially in the older patient. Numbness and pigmentation may also occur. Sometimes, additional surgery may be recommended.