

A Patient's Guide to Liposuction

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Dear Patient,

Thank you for choosing to explore liposuction surgery with Dr. Naidu. This guide was written to help you understand the risks and benefits of liposuction.

Please read the following information in its entirety prior to your visit, as this will make your time with us more productive. If you have any questions about anything contained in this material, we will be happy to discuss them with you at the time of your consultation.

We look forward to meeting you.

When to Consider Liposuction

Liposuction slims and reshapes specific areas of the body by removing excess fat deposits and improving your body contours and proportion. Despite good health and a reasonable level of fitness, some people may still have a body with disproportionate contours due to localized fat deposits. These areas may be due to family traits rather than a lack of weight control or fitness. Liposuction surgery can be used to treat stubborn fat pockets in many parts of the body including the abdomen, waist, thighs, hips, buttocks, arms, chest, and chin. It is not a treatment for obesity and is not a replacement for regular exercise and good eating habits. It is also not an effective treatment for cellulite. People with stubborn areas of fat who exercise regularly are the ideal candidates for liposuction.

Examination

During your examination, Dr. Naidu will evaluate the areas of excess fatty deposits and the quality of your overlying skin. The ideal candidate for liposuction surgery is a patient who has excellent skin tone or tissue elasticity with isolated areas of excess fat. She will also discuss your ideal weight, your plans for future pregnancies, and any weight-loss programs which may be recommended.

Procedural steps

After you have received general anesthesia, a solution known as “tumescent” solution is injected into the areas of treatment. This solution contains a local anesthetic, epinephrine (which causes blood vessels to shrink down or constrict), and a physiologic liquid solution. Small incisions are made for insertion of the cannulas.

Suction-assisted liposuction (SAL) is the traditional form of liposuction and involves the removal of fat with a high vacuum. Power assisted liposuction (PAL) is traditional SAL with the addition of a tool to increase the motion of the cannula, which can speed the removal of your fat. In select cases, ultrasound assisted liposuction (UAL) or VASER liposuction is used. This technique transmits energy through a special hand piece to help loosen and melt fat. This is best for larger areas, dense fat, and male patients.

Following surgery, you will be placed into a special compression garment which will assist in reduction of your swelling during the early postoperative period. Use the garment for the recommended period of time for a faster reduction in your swelling.

Additional procedures

Liposuction is sometimes performed in conjunction with tummy tuck surgery to remove excess skin from the lower abdomen, particularly following pregnancy or significant weight loss. It may also be performed at the same time as other procedures such as breast augmentation, breast reduction, and breast lift surgery. Additional procedures incur additional operating time, anesthesia, and surgical risks.

Surgery and Anesthesia

Surgery is performed on an outpatient basis. The surgery lasts 1-2 hours depending upon the amount of suction to be performed and is done under general anesthesia. Many patients worry about the risk of general anesthesia, but it is safe and assures that you will be completely comfortable during surgery. Prior to surgery you will be required to obtain routine blood work and in some cases preoperative clearance from your primary medical doctor. The evening prior to surgery, you should not eat or drink anything after midnight. This ensures that you will have an empty stomach prior to surgery, which is very important for your anesthesiologist to care for you safely. You will need to have a responsible adult available to escort you home after surgery.

Recovery

Following surgery, you will awaken in the recovery area. Once you are fully alert, you will be given something to eat and drink prior to discharge. You will have a surgical garment placed at the conclusion of the procedure. A responsible adult will need to be available to escort you home.

Patients are seen in the office 6-7 days following surgery. At that time your sutures will be removed.

Walking is permitted the day of surgery, but strenuous activity is limited for 2 weeks following surgery. Most patients do not complain of severe pain following surgery but note soreness and numbness of the skin. Pain medication is prescribed for any discomfort. Swelling will be present for the initial 2-3 months after surgery, and the final results are typically seen 3-6 months after surgery. The scars will continue to fade and soften for up to one year following surgery.

Risks of liposuction surgery

All surgery carries risks. The most frequently reported complications after liposuction are as follows:

Bleeding: Bleeding from your incisions can occur following surgery. In the event of significant bleeding, please contact Dr. Naidu immediately. Bleeding sometimes requires a return to the operating room to stop the bleeding vessel and evacuate any blood.

Infection: Infection following liposuction is very unusual. An infection may necessitate intravenous antibiotics. You will be given an antibiotic prior to surgery.

Pain: Most patients report only mild discomfort following surgery. A small number of patients may have permanent pain.

Numbness: Many patients have numbness at the sites of their liposuction for weeks to months following surgery. In rare cases, some areas may remain completely numb.

Scarring: You will have small scars following surgery. Although the scars typically improve with time, they may remain apparent.

Necrosis: Necrosis, or the death of skin and fat, may occur in smokers, following an infection, or with the use of steroids. This complication may require additional surgery.

Blood clots: Blood clots may form in the legs, or travel to the lungs, following liposuction surgery. This is a potentially fatal complication, and therefore preventive measures, including the use of leg compression devices during surgery, are taken with every patient.

Swelling: A small number of patients may experience prolonged swelling after surgery.

Contour deformities and irregularities: In some cases, indentations at the site of the suctioned areas may be visible.

Anesthesia risks: Although general anesthesia and sedation are very safe, all patients are screened for any personal or family history of anesthesia reactions.

What liposuction cannot do

Liposuction is not a substitute for weight loss or exercise. It also cannot address loose skin, which may require excision. Cellulite cannot be treated with liposuction. Patients who have ongoing weight loss, or are planning to become pregnant, should delay their surgery.



About Dr. Naidu

Nina S. Naidu, MD, FACS is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery and is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College. Her practice focuses on aesthetic and reconstructive surgery of the breast and body.

Dr. Naidu completed her undergraduate studies at The Johns Hopkins University and obtained her medical degree from Cornell University Medical College. After completing her general surgery and plastic surgery training at New York Presbyterian – Weill Cornell Medical Center, she performed an additional year of fellowship training at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a former member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS), and the International Society of Plastic Surgeons (ISAPS), and is an active Fellow of the American College of Surgeons (ACS). Dr. Naidu maintains privileges at New York Presbyterian Hospital – Weill Cornell Medical Center.



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