

Liposuction

Liposuction is a technique used to remove localised areas of fat by means of a small metal cannula inserted beneath the skin. The fat is removed by a strong vacuum attached to the cannula. Two or more small incisions are made in each area that requires treatment and multiple areas can be treated simultaneously, although there is a limit to how much fat can be safely removed during an individual operation.

Pre-operative Advice

Prior to surgery patients will be seen for a consultation where examination and discussion will be undertaken to explain the technique used and what should be a realistic expectation of liposuction. Patients who smoke are at greater risk of complications which include bleeding and wound infection and, therefore, are advised to refrain from smoking for at least six weeks prior to surgery and two weeks post-operatively. Patients should also avoid Aspirin and equivalent anti-inflammatory drugs for at least two weeks prior to surgery as this will increase the risk of bleeding. Patients should also have a steady weight as liposuction is not a weight loss procedure, it is a shape changing technique.

What happens before surgery: Patients are admitted on the day of surgery and will be seen before surgery by the nursing staff who will undertake routine pre-operative checks. They will also be seen by the Anaesthetist as most liposuction procedures are performed under general anaesthetic. Mr. Khan will also see the patients to take consent for the operation, will draw on the areas to be treated with a large felt tip pen to mark these specifically and take pre-operative photographs.

Operative procedure: Depending upon how many areas are being treated the operation can take between 40 minutes and 2 hours and will involve multiple small stab incisions to the areas to be treated. At the end of the operation a small absorbable stitch is placed in each stab wound and a dressing applied and then a pressure garment will be put on in the operating theatre to help reduce the amount of bruising and swelling. There will inevitably be some swelling and bruising in the region that has been treated and this may persist from two to three weeks. Patients are advised to wear their pressure garment for most of the time; it can be removed for hygiene and also washing the garment but certainly will have benefit during the first three weeks and, subsequently, support stockings or cycling shorts may be of use for up to six weeks. The scars from the small stab incisions will be red and lumpy in the initial couple of months and can take up to six to nine months to slowly fade and settle down. On occasions there can be patches of numbness in the area treated where nerves to the skin have been bruised but this usually recovers within a few weeks.

Follow-up: Patients will need to return for a wound check by the nurses seven days post-operatively and then are usually reviewed 1 month post-operatively by Mr. Khan to ensure that the bruising and swelling has settled down. There will be a final check usually 4 months post-operatively to ensure that a satisfactory result has been achieved.

Risks & Complications

As with all surgery complications can occur. There is frequently leakage through the wound; this is usually blood stained fluid and will settle rapidly. Occasionally there can be significant bleeding which may require a change of dressing or, very rarely, a return to theatre. There is also the risk of wound infection and there may be some redness around the wounds or even discharge. If this were to occur then a course of antibiotics will be prescribed and usually allows the problem to settle rapidly. Initially, there is significant swelling on occasions and it may be difficult to notice any benefit from the surgery during this period as it may take two to three weeks for the swelling to settle, the final result of the surgery takes some time to become apparent. The results of liposuction depend to a large degree the quality of skin and this needs to shrink back into the areas that have been treated and initially there may well be some dimpling and ridging within the skin as the swelling settles. If large amounts of fat are being removed and there is scarring within the deep tissues then this ridging and dimpling can be permanent. If two sides are being treated there may well be some asymmetry – if there is a significant problem or difference this may require further surgery to correct any defect. As with all cosmetic surgical procedure undertaken by Mr. Khan there is a fixed fee policy which means that no further charges are incurred for treatment or surgery required for complications that occur within one year following the initial treatment. **Follow-up:** Patients do not need suture removal as these are absorbable, but will be seen by a nurse at one week for a wound check and then seen at 1 and 4 months post-operatively by Mr. Khan. If you have any concerns at any stage please contact the Hospital where the surgery was undertaken who are open 24 hours a day and have a resident doctor who will be able to contact Mr. Khan if required.

Liposuction - Discharge Advice

Wound/Stitches: There will be at least 2 small incisions in each area that has been treated. These have a small absorbable suture and are covered by a dressing. There may be some oozing of oedema fluid from these small incisions in the first 24 hours and this can be blood stained but is usually not significant. The areas that are treated will be bruised and swollen and a pressure garment will have been applied while you are asleep. You will be seen at 1 week following surgery for a wound check by the nurses at the hospital and at 1 month by Mr. Khan once the bruising and swelling has settled.

Appearance: Initially the area treated can actually look more swollen and larger than originally and patients can actually have an increased weight when they go home due to retention of fluid, swelling and bruising. The pressure garment should be worn almost continually for the first 3 weeks.

Other features: Some patients will notice patches of numbness in the skin overlying the areas being treated due to bruising to the cutaneous nerves. This usually recovers as the bruising and swelling settles.

Pain relief: Depending on the extent of surgery there will be some discomfort with bruising and swelling but usually this is adequately controlled with simple pain killers such as Paracetamol and anti-inflammatory drugs and patients will be given advice concerning pain killers before leaving hospital.

Activities: For the first few days patients should mobilise gently and increase their activity as comfort allows. Patients are advised not to drive if they still have swelling and discomfort and it may be 6 – 8 weeks before activities such as sports can be undertaken again.

Causes for concern: Liposuction surgery is fortunately associated with few complications. There can occasionally be extensive bruising but bleeding is rare as is infection. Should you have any concerns you should seek medical attention as soon as possible.