PRINTZLAU

PRIVATHOSPITAL

Information on liposuctions

Who is eligible for a liposuction?

Regular fat and physiologic fat

Even though it is difficult to distinguish between different forms of fat, it is very helpful when trying to explain who is eligible to have a liposuction. The deep part of the skin consists of fat tissue. When you gain weight, the individual fat cells grow larger, the fatty layer of the skin expands and you become overweight. This is called common subdermalfat, and it shrinks with weight loss. Across from this are the so called physiologic fat storages. You will typically discover these fat storages in connection with puberty, as the body changes in compliance with the hormonal effects. The tendencies and degrees of fat storages in the body are very different for each individual and are heavily decided by hereditary factors. You will often be able to get an idea of your hereditary factors by looking at close relatives of the same sex. With women there may especially occur large fat storages around the thighs, hips and buttocks, changes that will typically be increased in connection with pregnancies. Men will sometimes develop fat storages on the back of the hips, the so called ”love handles”. With both sexes there will also develop fat storages on the chest. All the fat storing is worsened by overweight. The physiologic fat storages will not disappear even though you lose weight.

Weight

It is recommended that you have close to a normal weight before you consider having a liposuction done. This may be evaluated by using the so called Body Mass Index, BMI. BMI is calculated as (your weight in kg) / (your height in m.)^2 This means that if you weigh 65 kg and is 165 cm tall, you have a BMI of 65 kg/ (1,65 m)^2 = 24 kg/m^2.

- Underweight: BMI<18,5
- Normal weight: BMI 18,5-25
- Overweight: BMI 25-30
- Obese: BMI > 30

A light overweight does not prevent the possibility for a liposuction, but large overweight both causes poor results and larger risks of complications.

How is a liposuction carried out?

The individual areas

Some patients have just a single area where they wish to have a liposuction done while others may have several. Men and women desire treatments in different areas. This distinction is primarily caused by the different hormonal effects which endow the two sexes with fat storages in different areas on the body.

Females	**Males**
Outer thighs	”Love-handles”
Knees	Chest
Inner thighs	Stomach
Belly	Neck
Hips	
Neck	
Arms	

Combination-operations

Liposuctions can be made specifically for a single area, but most often the patients have more areas done. All areas are done under a single operation. The typical combinations are:

- Hips and outer thighs (2 regions)
- Outer thighs and inner thighs (2 regions)
- Outer -, inner thighs and knees (3 regions)
- Belly and hips(2 regions)
- Belly and ”love-handles” (2 regions)
- Belly, hips outer- and inner thighs (4 regions)

In this way a liposuction can quickly become a quite complex operation. In Denmark the law restricts offering liposuctions exceeding 4 liters. This is to protect patients against complications like salts and fluid imbalance and dead tissue (necrosis).

The individual areas

The neck

Many are bothered by surplus fat tissue on the front side of the neck, right under the chin. With some this appears as a double chin, and with others it merely extinguishes the angle between the chin and the neck. This change is typically caused by hereditary factors and is worsened visually if you have a weak chin. With age this change becomes more visible because the skin sags. A liposuction of this area must be done very carefully as the skin is thin and the amount fat tissue small. If the skin is sagging, this can be worsened by a liposuction. With younger patients a liposuction alone may be sufficient, but with older patients we typically recommend lifting the skin with either a neck lift or a facelift. An isolated liposuction of the neck is surgery which can be carried out in either general or local anesthesia – so called outpatient treatment, in which you will be checked out later the same day. The bandage applied goes down under the chin and up around the head and must be worn both day and night for the first week after the operation.

Chest area with males

A liposuction can be done for men who have an increased amount of fat on the chest. However, in many of these cases the patient has a so called male breast development which requires correction as well as, where a combined liposuction and open surgery will be recommended. Isolated liposuction of the chest of males is done through two small incisions in the skin crevice under the breasts. This surgery is typically done under general anesthesia and as an outpatient procedure, in which you will be able to return to your home later the same day.

The arms

Fat storages around the upper arms can be treated with a liposuction. If there simultaneously is a surplus of sagging skin, a liposuction will only worsen this and in these cases an arm

lift is recommended. With an isolated liposuction, a small incision is made far down on the upper arm. The incisions are typically done under full anesthesia as outpatient procedure, in which you will be able to return to your home later that same day. You will be given a so called ”bolero”; compression sleeves which are tied together behind the shoulders. The bolero must be used both day and night for 3 weeks.

The belly

The belly is an area where there is typically stored a large amount of fat. For most people this fat is ”normal fat”. As previously mentioned, a liposuction is rarely a good idea if it is a case of accumulated normal fat tissue, in such cases it is both healthier and cheaper trying to go on a diet and working out. However, in some cases there are larger fat storages in which a liposuction may be the right choice. This can only be finally decided at a preexamination with your plastic surgeon. Depending on the size of the liposuction on the belly, this is done through two or more small incisions, partly in the naval, partly below the naval and partly along the transition between the stomach and the flanks. A liposuction of the belly is normally done in general anesthesia and with removal of more than 1 liter of fat, the patient is hospitalized overnight. After the liposuction you are donned with a waist belt which you must wear for 3 weeks both day and night, and then for 3 more weeks when you are being active. If there is any excessive sagging skin on the belly, this will be worsened by a liposuction. In such cases a mini-tommy tuck may also be done.

Love handles

Fat storages on the back of the hips and on the small of the back is what is popularly named “love handles”. These fat storages can be seen on both men and women, but predominantly on men. This fat storage is worsened by obesity and age. If your weight is normal, a liposuction of this area is an ideal opportunity to reduce the size and thereby change the shape of the body permanently. The procedure is done through small incisions on the small of the back and the hip. The fat tissue is firmer in this area, and thus it is always recommended that the operation is done under general anesthesia. After the liposuction you are donned with a waist belt which you must wear for 3 weeks both day and night, and then for 3 more weeks when you are being active.

Hips

Many women, and a few men will experience increased fat storages around the hips. With women this is what we call a secondary gender characteristic; this, like the breasts, is stimulated in connection with the hormones' effect through puberty and pregnancy. Fat storages in these areas are one of nature's signs of femininity. With some women or men there may however be an imbalance between the amount of fat on the hips and the rest of the body. In these cases a liposuction may be rightful decision. For women a liposuction of the hips is often combined with a liposuction of the thighs which are often also affected. This simultaneous fat accumulation on the hips and thighs of women is called "pear shape", it is a typical body shape for mature overweight women. It is important to once again mention that overweight should be reduced through dieting and working out before considering having a liposuction. An isolated liposuction of the hips is done under general anesthesia as an outpatient procedure, in which you will return to your home later that same day. After the liposuction you are donned with a waist belt which you must wear for 3 weeks both day and night, and then for 3 more weeks when you are being active.

Outer thighs

Many women and a few men will experience increased fat storages on the outer thighs. With women this is what we call a secondary gender characteristic; this, like the breasts, is stimulated in connection with the hormones' effect through puberty and pregnancy. Fat storages in these areas are one of nature's signs of femininity. With some women there may however be an imbalance between the amount of fat on the hips and the rest of the body. In these cases a liposuction may be rightful decision. For women, a liposuction of the outer thighs is often combined with a liposuction of the hips, inner thighs and/or the knees.

This simultaneous fat accumulation on the hips and thighs of women is called "pear shape", it is a typical body shape for mature overweight women. It is important to once again mention that overweight should be reduced through dieting and working out before considering having a liposuction. The liposuction is done through three small incisions on each side. An isolated liposuction of the hips is done under general anesthesia as an outpatient procedure, in which you will return to your home later that same day.

Inner thighs

Especially women may have increased fat storages high up on the inner thighs. This may irritate if the thighs clash together when walking or running. With women this is what we call a secondary gender characteristic; this, like the breasts, is stimulated in connection with the hormones' effect through puberty and pregnancy. Fat storages in these areas are one of nature's signs of femininity. With some women there may however be an imbalance between the amount of fat on the thighs and the rest of the body. In these cases a liposuction may be rightful decision. For women, a liposuction of the inner thighs is often combined with a liposuction of the outer thighs and/or the knees. The skin on the inner thighs is very thin and a liposuction has risks of leaving unwanted sagging of the skin. After the liposuction you are donned with compression pants which you must use for 3 weeks both night and day, and thereafter for 3 more weeks when being active.

Knees

The inside of the knees is an area where there may be a relatively larger fat storage than in the surrounding areas. A liposuction of the knees is a relatively small operation which can be done under local anesthesia as an outpatient procedure. A small incision is made on the inside of the knee through which the liposuction is done. After the operation you are donned with a compromising knee brace which must be worn both day and night for 3 weeks.

Lower legs

Fat storage in the lower legs is often evenly spread out over the lower leg; this makes a liposuction of the area quite difficult, as well as more intrusive than the other more isolated liposuctions. The liposuction is done through several small incisions around the ankle, and on the middle of the lower leg on both the outer and inner side. The operation is done under general anesthesia and the patient is hospitalized overnight. After the operation you must use supportive socks for 6 weeks in order to reduce swelling.

Course of the operation from pre-examination to surgery

At the first visit, the plastic surgeon will, together with you, evaluate your wishes in respects with possibilities and limitations. Your body is inspected from head to toe, in order to

explore all possible corrections. If it is deemed feasible and rightful to have one or more liposuctions, we will then proceed to plan which type of liposuction is the most suitable for you. You will be informed about what is realistic to expect after the operation, what effects the operation has as well as which risks the operation entails.

The plastic surgeon will evaluate your health and whether it is necessary to do blood tests or other examinations before the operation can be carried out. A photo will be taken of the areas in question - these can be used as a “before and after” photo, if the operation is carried out and you give us the permission. As a private patient you have the right to, and is advised, to bring an assessor to your pre-examination. This gives you a good opportunity to discuss pros and cons in having your operation done, also after you leave the clinic. Legislation on “cosmetic treatment” also constitutes that there must pass 1 week from the pre-examination before you can book an appointment for the operation. This serves to protect you by preventing you from making any rash decisions and undergo an impulsive cosmetic operation.

Publicly outsourced patients are not bound by this legislation, but are recommended to follow the same precautions.

The operation

For any liposuction you must be hospitalized regardless of whether you may return to your home later the same day. With liposuctions under general anesthesia you must fast for at least 6 hours before the operation, but you may drink water up until 2 hours before. The nurse in the hospital ward will greet you, validate your identity and get you set. The anesthesiologist will go over the planned anesthesia with you, and your plastic surgeon will make the guiding marks on your body and make sure that you agree on the plan. As the operation finishes up a compression garment will be put on you. The type of the garment depends on which area has been treated.

After the operation

Just after the operation you are translocated to the recovery room where the head nurse and the anesthesiologist will keep you under observation, until you are fully awake. The

pain-relieving treatment is initiated. For many patients, nausea treatment is also needed. When you are fully awake you are translocated to your room in the ward. The plastic surgeon will inform you about the course of the operation.

The duration of hospitalization depends on which type of operation you have undergone. With larger liposuctions of more than 1 liter, you will be hospitalized overnight after the operation. The compression garments must typically be worn for up to 6 weeks after the operation. The first 3 weeks they must be worn day and night, and the last 3 weeks they must be worn when you are out of bed and active. After 14 days you are to return for a checkup and to have any stitches removed by the nurse.

Checkup

You are to come in for a checkup with your plastic surgeon 6 months after the operation. That is how long it will be before unevenness caused by edema will completely disappear. Then the result of the operation can be evaluated and new photos will be taken as documentation.

Subsequent effects

Scars

The scars from a liposuction are very small, typically between 5-7 mm. For the first 3 months the scars are red and swollen, thereafter they become light and flat. It is recommended to use a band aid treatment as long as the scars are red. The treatment will reduce the tendency of the scars to stay red and swollen. It can take up to 2 years before the final result of how the scars will look can be evaluated.

Temporary swelling

In the months after the liposuction there will be some swelling in the operated areas. This shows itself as unevenness in the skin. This will disappear on its own. In the weeks after the operation you are to use compression garents which reduce swelling. However, when the garment is removed there may be a period of several weeks in which the unevenness returns.

Numbing

The sensitivity in the treated area will be changed and feel different for days or weeks after the operation. This may be quite bothersome, especially right after the operation. However, in time the sensitivity will return to normal.

Complications

Bleeding

Hemorrhage in the form of small or large bruises is common after a liposuction. The discoloring will dissapear in about 3 weeks. In extremely rare cases there may be larger blood accumulations which require drainage through puncture or an operation.

Infections

Infections after a liposuction are very rare. In most cases the infection is superficial, and only affect the small scars. This can be treated with a local treatment or with antibiotics. In rare cases the infection is able to spread inwards and make it necessary to drain the infection or treatment with intravenous antibiotics under hospitalization. In some of these more serious incidents, the infection may destroy the expected result of the operation.

Unevenness

Most unevenness in the skin after a liposuction is caused by accumulated liquid, this dissipates over the course of the first months. In some cases there has been removed too much fat or too little fat in a small part of an area. This will cause permanent unevenness. If too little has been removed, typically a new liposuction of the area in question can be done without any additional fee. If too much fat has been removed it may be difficult or impossible to correct unevenness.

Dead tissue (necrosis)

If the liposuction is done too close under the skin, the blood circulation to this area may be destroyed and cause necrosis (dead tissue). If this is the case it is necessary to operate anew

and remove the dead area and possibly perform a skin transfer. This will ruin the cosmetic result of the operation.

Hypertrophic scarring

With some patients the scars stay swollen and red, so called hypertrophic scarring. This is disfiguring, and the scars can have a tendency to cause itching and soreness. This is initially treated with a long-term band-aid treatment. If this does not have sufficient effect, a shot containing steroid hormone can be injected into the scar. Finally, it can be attempted to cut away the scar and suture the wound again.

A special type of scarring which is called 'keloid scarring' is inherent, here the scarring tissue spreads itself over the original scar. Patients with this condition should keep away completely from cosmetic surgery.

Blod clot

With big liposuctions there is a small risk of blood clotting in the legs. This is not in itself dangerous as the blood clots are formed in the vein system. However, if a blood clot comes loose and is transported along the bloodstream up to the lung vessels, embolism (blockage of an artery in the lungs) will occur. This can be a fatal condition. Some patients have also experienced fat emboli, in which fat tissue is transported through the bloodstream and gets stuck in the veins as clots.

Durability

A liposuction makes a permanent change of the shape of your body. A liposuction does not however, prevent you from gaining weight. But you will gain weight according to your "new shape", and when you lose that weight again, the result of your liposuction will still be there. As we age the skin's flexibility is reduced. This means that a treated area slowly changes its appearance, and the skin may age faster than in areas that have not been treated.