



LIPO

Fact,
Fiction
and
Fantasy

Although liposuction is an extremely popular body contouring procedure, many aspects of this treatment are still very misunderstood.

DR VERNON CHING debunks 10 common misconceptions, or myths, about liposuction.

According to figures released by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons this year, liposuction was the aesthetic surgical procedure performed most commonly in the USA in 2018, second only to breast augmentation (246 354 procedures, up 5% from 2016).

This treatment has revolutionised body contouring in the 21st century, with multiple innovations being added to enhance patient results.

Yet despite its mantle of mystery, many misconceptions still exist about liposuction.

MYTH 1

Liposuction is dangerous
While it's true that every surgery is not without risk, liposuction

is no more hazardous than any other cosmetic procedure, provided an experienced plastic surgeon performs the surgery for the right indication, of course. Newer, sophisticated methods have evolved over the last few years, resulting in safer, improved results. These include laser liposuction, as well as the SAFE liposuction technique using power-assisted liposuction (PAL) handpieces.

MYTH 2

Liposuction is not for 'older' people
Provided that patients are in good general health, there is no contraindication to performing liposuction (which is both safe and effective). Skin quality will determine the extent to which the redraping will occur following

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liposuction. Energy-based therapies (EBT) such as laser combined with liposuction can assist with skin contraction. Velashape, a non-invasive skin tightening EBT can also help in the post-operative period.

MYTH 3

Liposuction can help you lose weight

Liposuction is not a treatment to lose weight, but rather a body contouring technique that plastic surgeons generally perform on exercise- and weight-resistant fatty deposits in patients within roughly 30% of a healthy weight range. That being said, frequently, in patients who do not meet these criteria, debulking fat pockets can improve contour (thereby improving a patient's appearance). A patient that looks better, feels better, exercises better and eats better subsequently losing more weight. Liposuction is then essentially a psychological boost to those patients struggling with weight loss.

MYTH 4

Liposuction will fix lax skin
Liposuction cannot tighten lax skin

with reduced skin elasticity – in fact, patient selection is all important to exclude those who expect this result. In those patients with excess fat and skin, a skin resection operation with fat removal (such as a tummy tuck) may be necessary to improve patient outcomes.

MYTH 5

Fat deposits that are removed will return after liposuction

Liposuction is a permanent procedure, provided patients maintain their exercise and eating routines following surgery. Those areas liposuctioned do, however, retain some fat cells – which increase in size if weight is regained. If patients do put on weight, less weight will be regained in the treated areas, thereby giving the impression that fat has moved from the liposuctioned areas to other areas.

MYTH 6

Liposuction is always the solution to belly fat

Liposuction cannot treat belly fat, but can address subcutaneous fat lying in the layer between the skin and the muscle of the anterior abdominal wall. However, liposuction cannot remove

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Liposuction is a body contouring technique that plastic surgeons generally perform on exercise- and weight-resistant fatty deposits in patients who are within roughly 30% of a healthy weight range

intra-abdominal or visceral fat – which only diet and exercise can remedy.

MYTH 7

Liposuction is only for women
More and more men are seeking liposuction body contouring procedures. Indeed, this cosmetic treatment was one of the top five cosmetic operations sought by men in the USA last year (with commonly requested treatment areas being the chest, abdomen and flanks).

MYTH 8

You can get back into your groove right after liposuction
The downtime from liposuction varies, depending on how many areas your plastic surgeon treats. In my practice, the cannulae insertion sites (which are 3 mm in length each) are left open to allow the drainage of fluid in the first 24 hours, after which closure occurs

spontaneously. This significantly reduces swelling and bruising. Patients are also advised to use arnica cream to minimise bruising and, at two weeks after surgery, a non-invasive skin tightening treatment is recommended. The most common after-effects include swelling, bruising, and pain at, and around, the treatment areas. Generally, in my practice, patients need to wear garments for two weeks and can resume normal activities at six weeks.

MYTH 9

Liposuction can treat cellulite
Unfortunately, liposuction does not treat cellulite – which is not merely an irregular deposit of fat, but is caused by fibrous bands from the deeper tissues that attach to the dermis of the skin. These small fatty pockets of fat then push up, giving that characteristic bumpy and cobbled appearance. Liposuction only removes deeper fatty tissue, and thus does

not affect the dermal appearance of cellulite.

MYTH 10

Liposuction is the 'easy way out'
Liposuction ideally treats exercise- and diet-resistant fatty pockets to contour and streamline areas in people of normal body mass index (BMI). It is not a weight-loss operation. Newer etching techniques, using PAL with special cannulae, can accentuate shadows and highlight other areas that enhance the aesthetics of especially the abdomen.

To conclude, liposuction is an effective, safe, minimally invasive technique to improve body contour, provided an experienced, qualified plastic surgeon performs this procedure using state-of-the-art equipment to enhance your clinical result. ■



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