

MODERN LIPOSUCTION

A Logical Alternative Therapy for Obesity and Lipodystrophy

By Walter A. Dobson, D.O., F.A.C.O.S.



Over one-third of the adult population in this country (in excess of 58 million) are either overweight or obese, leaving the medical community searching for answers. While obesity is a growing epidemic, under a skilled surgeon's care, liposuction may provide a logical alternative where other therapies have failed or as an adjunct to those which have been successful.

The Problem with Obesity

Obesity is a national epidemic that creates serious health risks in many Americans and results in burgeoning financial costs to society. National health statistics calculate direct and indirect costs to society for treating obesity to be \$99.12 billion annually. Further, obesity is a contributing risk factor in four of the seven leading causes of death in the United States. The bottom line is that obesity can be a deadly disease for a large percentage of the population.

Studies today clearly demonstrate that obesity and associated disorders continue as a multi-billion dollar drain on the U.S. economy and the health of a growing number of Americans, making prevention and treatment for the obese a nationwide health priority. Such alarming statistics justify the search within the scientific community for new therapeutic methods to treat this growing epidemic, particularly when conventional treatments have failed.

Liposuction has proven an effective alternative treatment for a large number of patients suffering from obesity and/or lipodystrophy. Obesity and lipodystrophy occur when a person gains weight causing

an increase in the size of fat cells. When that individual begins to lose weight, each fat cell decreases in size, while the overall number of fat cells remains somewhat constant. Liposuction is the only surgical procedure that actually reduces the number of fat cells.

Today, improved equipment and innovative surgical techniques such as tumescent and ultrasonic lipoplasty have revolutionized liposuction and provide dramatic results for the obese patients, as well as those with concentrated areas of fat. Historically, liposuction was unavailable to most obese patients, as only those patients who were slightly overweight were considered good surgical candidates for liposuction. Today, increasing numbers of patients with varying degrees of obesity are able to enjoy what modern liposuction technology can offer them.

Scores of men and women, including professionals competing for jobs and others dissatisfied with disproportionate areas of their body, have joined the obese in the search for effective treatment options for surplus fat. Most men and women who come to my office for solutions for obesity or lipodystrophy have already tried a multi-

tude of diets, prescribed medications, and exercise programs. Many have investigated or undergone other surgical techniques, such as vertical banded gastroplasty, gastric bypass, or the adjustable gastric band. Ultimately, many of these patients have turned to antidepressants to treat their troubled emotional state in response to failed therapies, persistent obesity, and lipodystrophy.

Liposuction as an Alternative Therapy for Treating Obesity and Lipodystrophy

Improved techniques in liposuction and modern equipment make liposuction a safe and effective treatment for obesity and lipodystrophy. Liposuction is a surgical technique that removes unwanted deposits of fat located between the skin and muscle. Developed in the late 1970's in Europe, liposuction landed on American shores in 1982, and is now the most commonly performed cosmetic procedure in this country. Liposuction has undergone a continuous evolution and refinement that have included changes in cannulae design and various infiltration techniques, with improved and more sophisticated high tech equipment. Patient demand may explain the dramatic advances in surgical procedures, as surgeons search for newer and better methods to meet the growing number of patients choosing this form of therapy.

Modern liposuction involves a combination of techniques. The tumescent and ultrasonic techniques allow surgeons to treat multiple areas, removing larger amounts of fat without significant blood loss, together with less edema and bruising than they would have experienced only a short time ago.

The tumescent technique, used in conjunction with ultrasonic liposuction, offers an attractive solution for the obese and those suffering from lipodystrophy. This technique is considered by many as the safest form of liposuction, as it reduces fluid and electrolyte shifts, while allowing for removal of large volumes of fat during one procedure. The use of the tumescent technique utilizing smaller diameter cannulae permits local sedation and effective vasoconstriction permitting significant success in large body contouring with safety and efficiency.

The Physician Patient Relationship for an Effective Surgical Experience

The obese and patients suffering from lipodystrophy should be considered satisfactory candidates for liposuction. The skilled surgeon can thus achieve impressive, circumferential reduction, improved body contours, along with grateful, satisfied patients. The tumescent technique in combination with internal ultrasound is also beneficial in male patients by distending the more fibrous fat found in and around the flanks and back as it magnifies the deformity, and allows for an easier and more all-inclusive removal with small diameter cannulae.

Ultrasonic assisted lipoplasty effectively emulsifies fat by cellular fragmentation with the use of ultrasonic energy. The liquefied fat, along with the infused tumescent fluid, forms a stable fatty emulsion that can be either simultaneously or subsequently extracted from the subcutaneous space by means of vacuum suction and small suction cannulas.

My personal patient experience and an exhaustive research of experiences related by cosmetic surgeons all over the world have revealed that tumescent and ultrasonic liposuction in combination offer the patient a logical alternative in the treatment of obesity and lipodystrophy. I have carefully recorded pre-operative, post-operative and intraoperative data on my patient population. My studies have revealed extremely high patient satisfaction, and further confirm that large volumes of fat can be safely and effectively removed with minimal blood loss, little or no bruising, and an extraordinary control of contour. Modern liposuction techniques for the removal of adipose tissue have proven to provide vastly improved advantages over traditional liposuction.

An unexpected advantage emerged from my experience. Because the results of liposuction are so dramatic and immediate, the patient instantly achieves increased self-esteem and determination that many patients failed to realize with alternative therapies. Thus, the patients are more receptive to diet and exercise to maintain their new look. Not only does the patient look and feel like a new person, he or she achieves better overall health and fitness, with increased energy, determination, and emotional well-being.

Patients suffering from obesity or lipodystrophy come to my office where I conduct an evaluation of their psychological well-being, body type, and skin elasticity. Some patients have poor skin quality that might not contract well after surgery. These patients may be candidates for skin reductions either performed during the initial surgical procedure, or at some point within a year post-surgery. Therefore, during this stage of the pre-surgical evaluation process, I consult with the patient if it appears skin resection and/or muscle tightening may be necessary to achieve optimum results.

After a complete evaluation the patient's commissions are accepted and surgical planning begins. Individually tailored surgical alternatives are reviewed, as I help the patient understand that one of the goals of liposuction is to reduce body fat and mass. So that I can offer the patient predictable results to ultimately improve both body appearance and self-esteem, I carefully review the safest methods for corporal contouring and reshaping of that patient's individual needs.

The patient's physical stature and lipodystrophy are carefully analyzed to determine the number of procedures that may be required to achieve the patient's desired results. Body contouring for some patients is not a single-stage procedure. More than one procedure is often necessary to ensure the desired endpoint.

Next, I discuss the risks inherent in any type of surgical procedure, and those peculiar to liposuction. Though rare, liposuction, like any surgical procedure, involves risks and complications. The most common complications in liposuction are related to the skin. A skin necrosis occurs in approximately 3% of liposuction patients nationwide. In my surgical experience, skin necrosis occurs most often among smokers, diabetics, patients with a very large abdominal region, or areas where the patient has undergone a prior surgical procedure.

The patient returns for a pre-op surgical appointment that involves a complete

patient medical history, pre-op surgical labs, EKG, chest x-rays, pre-op markings, and photographs of the surgical areas. All pre-op and post-op paperwork is carefully reviewed with the patient, along with the surgical consent. The patient has two to three weeks prior to their procedure to review all of the educational material and consent forms that are provided. Patients are urged to read all printed material and are required to verify by their signature that they have read and understand all of the material in full prior to surgery. Further, they are encouraged to call my office with any questions or concerns.

Tumescent volume and total fat volume are calculated. Finally, the patients begin pre-op vitamin therapy, including vitamin K to decrease bruising, vitamin C and iron. The patients receive counseling about lifestyle modifications, such as diet and exercise regimens, together with explanations about the need to eliminate alcohol and tobacco use.

At the Dallas Fort Worth Institute of Body Sculpturing, I regularly perform liposuction on an outpatient basis, utilizing either twilight or general anesthesia, with an anesthetist present at all times during any procedure. A warming blanket is placed under the patient throughout the procedure, and during recovery for maintenance of constant body temperature and for patient comfort.

At the conclusion of the surgery, the patient is placed in a compression garment that must be worn twenty-four hours per day for three weeks. Following liposuction, patients continue to decrease in size for several months with marked skin contraction. Proper compression is paramount during the entire recovery process. Patients commonly experience a two to three size reduction from their pre-surgical appearance. Most patients return to work and normal activities within three to seven days. Final surgical results occur over the next three to six months, depending on the size of the patient and the amount of fat removed.

The results of liposuction are dramatic and immediate. Patients who have elected to have liposuction are happy with their decision, excited about their overall appearance, and their ability to look and

feel better in smaller sized clothing. Often they are surprised by the added benefits that include increased mobility and energy. Many willingly incorporate a well-balanced diet and new exercise regimen into their lifestyle to maintain their new body contour.

At one time, studies suggested that if one day we could eliminate cancer from this planet, life expectancy would be increased by one year. Today, research shows if there were no more obesity, life expectancy would be increased by five years. Liposuction may not eliminate obesity or provide an answer for everyone, but everyone suffering from obesity or lipodystrophy should consider liposuction among his or her treatment options.

Physicians and surgeons with questions or comments concerning this article, their surgical experiences in this field, or patient problems are encouraged to contact Dr. Dobson at the Dallas-Fort Worth Institute of Body Sculpturing through his website at www.dfwibodysculpture.com or at his office telephone of 972-660-3188.

A native of New York, Walter Dobson, D.O., graduated from Des Moines College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery. He completed his residency in general surgery and received his board certification from the American Osteopathic Board of Surgery in 1982. Having practiced both general and cosmetic surgery for twenty years, his practice is now limited to body contouring techniques and research at the Dallas-Fort Worth Institute of Body Sculpturing of which he founded. Dr. Dobson has received the honorary title of "Fellow" from the following organizations: American College of Osteopathic Surgeons, American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery, American Society of Cosmetic Breast Surgeons, Cosmetic Surgical Society of Texas, and the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery. He was honored this year in the National Register's *Who's Who 2000 Edition*.

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Case Study

A 38-year-old female with marked lipodystrophy, 5'7", 212 lbs, dress size 22, G3P3003, good skin tone with no serious prior medical illness. This patient is a good candidate for modern liposuction. Two-stage procedure was planned. First stage procedure areas treated included abdomen, anterior thighs, inner thighs and knees. Second stage procedure areas treated included posterior axilla, flanks, waist, hips, buttocks, lateral thighs and posterior thighs. Post-operative views show the patient 12 weeks from the first stage and 5 weeks post second stage. As demonstrated she showed remarkable change in body contour. The patient's weight dropped to 176 lbs. and her dress size from size 22 to a size 12. Patient experienced good skin retraction without the need of a skin reduction




Figure 1

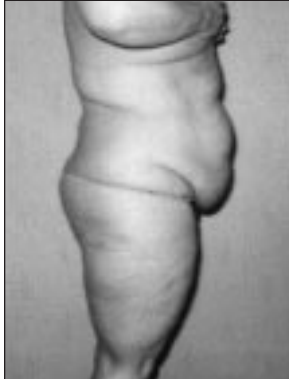


Figure 2




Figure 3




Figure 4

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