

What's So Smart about SmartLipo?

BY ERIC CHANG, M.D.

Liposuction is the removal of fat from underneath the skin to contour areas of the body that traditionally store fat. The best candidates are people at or near their ideal body weight, who have stubborn areas which do not respond, no matter how much exercise and dieting.

Originated in France and popularized in the United States during the 1980's, liposuction has become one of the most popular plastic surgical procedures performed today. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, liposuction is the second most common cosmetic surgical procedure performed today, behind only breast augmentation surgery. In fact, over 300,000 liposuction procedures were performed in 2007.

The most common technique of liposuction performed today is tumescent liposuction. This involves the addition of fluid to the targeted body part to anesthetize the area, and also to control bleeding within the area. The fatty layer between the skin and muscle



is then removed with suction cannulas through small incisions made in the skin.

Ultrasonic liposuction is the addition of ultrasound energy, which is used to liquefy fat prior to its removal. This technique is very helpful for areas of fat which are firmer and harder to remove, such as the male breast and back tissue.

Laser assisted lipolysis, better known as laser liposuction, uses focused laser energy to melt fat underneath the skin,

after which it is removed through small suction cannulas. Smartlipo was one of the first and remains the most popular of these laser devices. The 1064 nm wavelength of energy used by the device not only destroys fat cells, but also coagulates blood vessels in the area, leading to less surgical bleeding and a decrease in post-operative bruising.

Recent advances in technology have led to the newly introduced Smartlipo MPX. This laser adds a second wavelength to the earlier device, a 1320 nm wavelength which is absorbed by water, and causes heating of the undersurface of the skin. This heating, and the subsequent formation of collagen during the healing process after surgery, can lead to tightening of the skin and better ultimate skin contour than traditional liposuction.

Laser liposuction is usually performed in an office setting, on an awake patient. Minimal oral sedation is needed for the procedure. Local anesthesia is used to numb the surgical area, and the procedure usually takes 1 to 2 hours. The sometimes severe nausea and prolonged recovery from general anesthesia are avoided.

Treatment areas include the abdomen and love-handle areas, back, neck, and upper arms, as well as the thighs, knees, and male breast (otherwise known as gynecomastia). For safety reasons, the amount of fat removed at one sitting should be limited.

Patients are asked to avoid heavy exercise for 2 to 3 weeks after surgery, and may be required to wear a compression garment to help reduce swelling for a month after the operation. Because of the reduction in bruising and swelling seen with laser liposuction, patients

can often return to their normal routine and work after only 2 to 3 days.


However, the technology is only as good as the practitioner behind the controls. Because the concept of liposuction seems tantalizingly simple, many non-plastic surgeons have taken to performing the procedure. The truth is, liposuction involves knowing when and when not to operate, as well having the experience to know exactly where and how much fat to remove for the optimal result possible.

Smartlipo can be a smart decision for you this spring. It is an effective, FDA approved method for removing unwanted fat, performed safely under local anesthesia, which allows for a rapid recovery and return to your busy lifestyle.



"Dear Dr. Chang, I just wanted to thank you for everything!! You did such fantastic work and I am so very very happy. I feel like a new person, thanks to you! I have recommended you to all my friends and have expressed what a great doctor you are in all ways."

—N.H., Baltimore, Maryland




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