

Liposuction

Qualifications, structure and delivery of liposuction

What is liposuction?

Liposuction surgery, also known as fat removal surgery, is designed to help remove areas of fat and reshape particular areas of the body. It is a procedure best suited for body sculpting rather than weight loss.

To ensure that the procedure is suitable, the patient's BMI (body mass index) is measured. If they are very overweight it is likely that they will not be suitable for liposuction as there are physical limits to the amount of fat that can safely be removed from the body.

What is the procedure?

- Liposuction or fat removal surgery is performed either under general anaesthetic or under local anaesthetic with sedation, and is often treated as a day case.
- The procedure usually takes between one and two hours to complete depending on the area being treated and how much fat is being removed.
- The surgeon will make a small incision in the area being treated before inserting a thin plastic tube called a cannula. The other end of this cannula is attached to a powerful vacuum device which removes the fat quickly and efficiently.
- There is no set price for liposuction surgery as every single patient is different and treated on an entirely individual, case-by-case basis.

Who performs the procedure?

The Government body, the General Medical Council (GMC), has set up a register of Surgeons. Liposuction is most commonly performed by surgeons who have acquired special training in the techniques of liposuction.

Surgeons who perform liposuction or other cosmetic surgeries are called "cosmetic surgeons." Most cosmetic surgeons have had previous residency training in one or more surgical specialties.

For example, liposuction surgeons often have had specialised training in Dermatology, Plastic Surgery, Facial Plastic Surgery, Otolaryngology (Ear, Nose, & Throat), General Surgery, Ophthalmology, or Gynecologic Surgery.

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Information Notes



Training in these surgical specialties increases that likelihood that the surgeon will have had training in basic safe surgical methods that minimize the risks of infection and other common surgical complications.

Many also tend to hold the qualification Fellow of The Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) or equivalent from another European or Commonwealth country.

What kind of qualifications should a liposuction surgeon have?

All liposuction surgeons should have:

- in-depth training in surgical techniques that minimize the risk of infection;
- training in advanced cardiac life support in order to be able to diagnose and treat cardio-vascular complications;
- training and knowledge of the pharmacology associated with tumescent local anesthesia;
- extensive in-classroom instruction and hands-on liposuction training in the operating room.

Have all liposuction surgeons had standardised training in liposuction?

Any licensed physician may legally do liposuction. Some physicians who call themselves "liposuction surgeons" may have inadequate qualifications and little or no training in liposuction.

Likewise, some excellent surgeons with good basic surgical training may not be skilled at doing liposuction. Training among different specialties may not be the same in all aspects of liposuction safety.

There is controversy about the safety of:

- doing large volume liposuction;
- doing "total body" liposuction;
- performing unrelated surgical procedures (such as facelift, breast augmentation, or hysterectomy) together with liposuction on the same day.

Surgeons who do liposuction under local anesthesia typically feel it is safer to perform large volume liposuction by dividing the procedure into two or three smaller procedures separated by three to four weeks.

Are liposuction surgeons trained to take care of cardiac emergencies?

Surgical complications in liposuction are quite rare. The greatest risk with liposuction is cardiac or respiratory complications due to a cardiovascular disease, drug reactions, or human error associated with general anesthesia.

From the perspective of safety, all liposuction surgeons and the surgeon's operating-room assistants should be well trained and experienced in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS).

Is the surgeon's specialty an important factor in safety of liposuction?

There is no evidence that one surgical specialty is safer or better qualified to do liposuction than any other specialty. The difference in safety is almost entirely attributable to the type of anesthesia used for liposuction.

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Patients who have liposuction by surgeons who do liposuction under general anesthesia or IV sedation are more like to have serious complications than when liposuction is done totally by local anesthesia.

There have been no deaths among patients of dermatologists, plastic surgeons, or any other specialists who do tumescent liposuction totally by local anesthesia.

Do providers offering cosmetic surgery require a license and registration?

All independent healthcare providers offering Cosmetic Surgery must be registered with the appropriate regulatory body and able to demonstrate their compliance to exacting standards and set outcomes.

In the UK, there are three regulatory bodies:

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) for England;
- The Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) for Wales;
- The Regulatory Quality and Improvement Authority (RQIA) for Northern Ireland.

Healthcare providers must adhere strictly to the clinical governance criteria set out by the regulatory bodies above, under the responsibility of the Nominated Individual (NI).

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