

Body

Does Liposuction Really Last Forever?

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When you think of liposuction, a graphic image might pop up in your head. However, for many people, the procedure is the answer to their [body-contouring](#) prayers and not as bad as they originally thought it would be. It can transform a person's body and make common trouble spots of fat, like the thighs and stomach, completely disappear. But to work up the courage to get the procedure and then actually go through with it, you want to know that it's going to last. So here's the good news: it will! Here, the expert reasons why.

New York plastic surgeon Melissa Doft, MD, says, "Unless a person is morbidly obese or a growing child, they have a finite number of fat cells. When you gain or lose weight, these fat cells expand or shrink. What liposuction does is remove the [fat cells](#) forever. Not every fat cell will be removed, so it is still possible to gain weight in the area that was liposucted, but the weight is gained in a more even distribution." This means that if you typically gain weight in your thighs, and then you have liposuction there, you may still gain a little there afterward, but not *only* there. Therefore, your body will look much more proportional and any weight gain won't be as noticeable.

But, just because you get liposuction and no longer have excess fat, doesn't mean you can sit back, put your feet up and give up [diet](#) and exercise. In order to maintain your results, you need to continue leading a healthy lifestyle. "Liposuction is an excellent procedure for patients who are looking to contour specific areas of their body, but it is not ideal for patients who are looking for a fast solution for [weight loss](#)," says Dr. Doft. "A good candidate is someone who is around their ideal body weight and eats properly and exercises, but has one or two areas of fat that just won't go away."

As far as the actual procedure goes, your doctor will determine the type of sedation you'll need based on the area that's being treated. And, larger parts of the body, like the abdomen and thighs, will require

an operating room, but smaller areas, like around the [knees](#) and [neck](#), can often be done in a doctor's office (make sure you choose a board-certified plastic surgeon or [dermatologist](#) with the proper accreditations). "A small incision is made near the area that is to be treated—I often use an IV needle to make my incisions (that's how small the incisions can be!)," says Dr. Doft. "Through this incision, a mixture of fluid is injected. The fluid is made of salt water, epinephrine and lidocaine. The salt water helps separate the fat from the surrounding skin and muscle, the epinephrine vasoconstricts all blood vessels in the area so there is less bleeding, and the lidocaine is a numbing medication so you don't experience pain. Afterward, a long tube is used to remove the fat cells for good. You will see a difference immediately, but the final result takes six months to see because the swelling needs to resolve."

It's also important to note that there are several new lipo technologies that have evolved over the past few years. "These include power-assisted, ultrasound-assisted (VASAR) and laser-assisted liposuction (Smartlipo or SlimLipo)," explains Dr. Doft. "In well-trained hands, similar results can be achieved using any modality. But, I do think laser- or ultrasound-assisted liposuction is beneficial for gynecomastia (male breasts), [back fat](#) and secondary or repeat liposuction where there is more scar tissue."

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