

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Liposuction*

***but were afraid to ask**

Dreams of a smaller butt, leaner thighs, and flatter abs propel women to undergo liposuction. We tell you what it's really like. By Joan Kron

No other plastic surgery procedure inspires the emotions evoked by liposuction. There's lust (for anyone who has pedaled a stationary bike long enough to circumnavigate the globe and still stares down at the same old saddlebags); defiance (Just suck the damn stuff out!); and, of course, fear (Could you be left scarred or misshapen? Could you die?).

According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), 385,390 people had liposuction in 2001—an increase of 118 percent since 1997. Of these, 37 percent were under 35. And the procedure's popularity continues to trend upward.

In an attempt to demystify liposuction, Allure posed questions to top experts and followed five patients with different complaints through their operations. For anyone considering—or just curious about—liposuction, we present the not-so-pretty truth.

Do patients really have to wear a girdle?

Most doctors still advise their patients to wear a tight garment that resembles biking shorts for one to six weeks. "The girdle cuts down on bruising and swelling after surgery," New York plastic surgeon **Sharon Giese** says. For larger-volume cases, the girdle is absolutely crucial for up to three weeks, she says. Unfortunately, the garment feels as unpleasant as it sounds. It creases and dents the skin and can make clothes feel tight. And when nature calls? Well, there's an opening for that. Nobody said surgery was pretty.

Does liposuction affect metabolism?

Liposuction can speed up metabolism in some people, but not all, says Giese, who did a small study on this at Georgetown University. In that study, 7 out of 14 patients did have an increase in metabolism.

WAIST, ABDOMEN, THIGHS, AND KNEES



Before



Five Months Post-Op



Before



Five Months Post-Op

The patient: Jordan*, age 36, event planner

Before: 5'8", 157 lb; size 10 pants

After: 158 lb; size 8 to 10 pants

The problem: Despite daily cardio workouts, weight lifting, and regular tennis and swimming, Jordan felt self-conscious of her abdomen and lower body. "I'm looking forward to not walking around with a sweater tied around my waist," she said.

The procedure: New York plastic surgeon **Sharon Giese** used internal ultrasound to break down fat in Jordan's thighs, abdomen, waist, and knees, followed by traditional liposuction. She removed three pounds of fat. "There's no more to remove," Giese says. "She's all muscle."

The recovery: The day of surgery, Jordan's incisions oozed and she took two Vicodin. "I was able to get to the bathroom myself and even folded some laundry," she said. The next day, the oozing had almost stopped.

"There's a lot less pain than I anticipated. I've stopped the pain pills. It's more discomfort—like a really tough workout," she said.

Five months post-op: "I expected subtle changes and I got a few,"

Jordan says. "My lower abdomen is basically flat. My inner knees where there was extra fat are more concave. They show the greatest improvement. But does anyone say, 'Oh my God, you look thin?' No."