



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS*

Fat Cells Don't Return to Treated or Untreated Areas After Liposuction, ASPS Study Finds

New Study Refutes Previous Findings Claiming Fat Returns, Redistributes to Other Areas of the Body

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Ill. (July 31, 2012) – Since it made its debut in North America 30 years ago, liposuction has promised to permanently remove excess fat from stubborn areas, barring extreme weight gain. New research reveals liposuction lives up to its promise. According to a study in the August issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official medical journal of the [American Society of Plastic Surgeons](#) (ASPS), fat cells neither return to treated areas nor get redistributed to untreated areas of the body after liposuction.

The new study refutes a report published last year in *Obesity*, which concluded that fat returns to untreated areas of the body, especially the abdomen, shoulders, and arms within one year after [liposuction](#). In a follow-up story, the New York Times featured a caricature of a distorted woman, looking trim in the lower body, but like the Incredible Hulk in the upper body. This disturbing image was widely publicized on the Internet.

The new study by ASPS Member Surgeon Eric Swanson, MD, Leawood, Kansas, evaluated 301 patients having liposuction, either alone or in combination with abdominoplasty, using standardized photographs and computer-assisted measurements of body dimensions obtained preoperatively and at least three months after surgery. The study revealed no evidence of fat regrowth in treated areas of the arms, abdomen, or lower body. Additionally, upper body dimensions were unchanged after surgery, indicating no fat redistribution. Average reductions in hip measurements remained significant in patients followed one year or more after both liposuction and combined liposuction/abdominoplasty procedures. The average hip reduction was significant even among a subgroup of 34 patients who gained five pounds or more after surgery.

“Previous studies have evaluated small numbers of patients and used imprecise measuring techniques, limiting their power to reliably detect changes,” said Dr. Swanson. “Our study included a sufficient number of patients and used precise measurements, making the conclusions highly reliable. Patients can be reassured that their improvements will last and they need not worry about putting weight back on disproportionately.”

Dr. Swanson adds, “Of course, liposuction does not change your ability to gain or lose weight. Its value is in permanently reducing the number of fat cells in problem areas. For any given weight you will be in the future, your proportions will be better after liposuction, barring extremes in weight gain.”

According to ASPS statistics, liposuction has been among the top five most popular cosmetic surgical procedures since 1992, the year ASPS began collecting its plastic surgery procedural statistics. Last year, nearly 205,000 liposuction procedures were performed.

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For more than 60 years, *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*® (<http://journals.lww.com/plasreconsurg/>) has been the one consistently excellent reference for every specialist who uses plastic surgery techniques or works in conjunction with a plastic surgeon. The official journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*® brings subscribers up-to-the-minute reports on the latest techniques and follow-up for all areas of plastic and reconstructive surgery, including breast reconstruction, experimental studies, maxillofacial reconstruction, hand and microsurgery, burn repair, and cosmetic surgery, as well as news on medico-legal issues.

About ASPS

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is the world's largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons. Representing more than 7,000 Member Surgeons, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on aesthetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 94 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. ASPS advances quality care to plastic surgery patients by encouraging high standards of training, ethics, physician practice and research in plastic surgery. You can learn more and visit the American Society of Plastic Surgeons at PlasticSurgery.org or Facebook.com/PlasticSurgeryASPS and Twitter.com/ASPS_news.