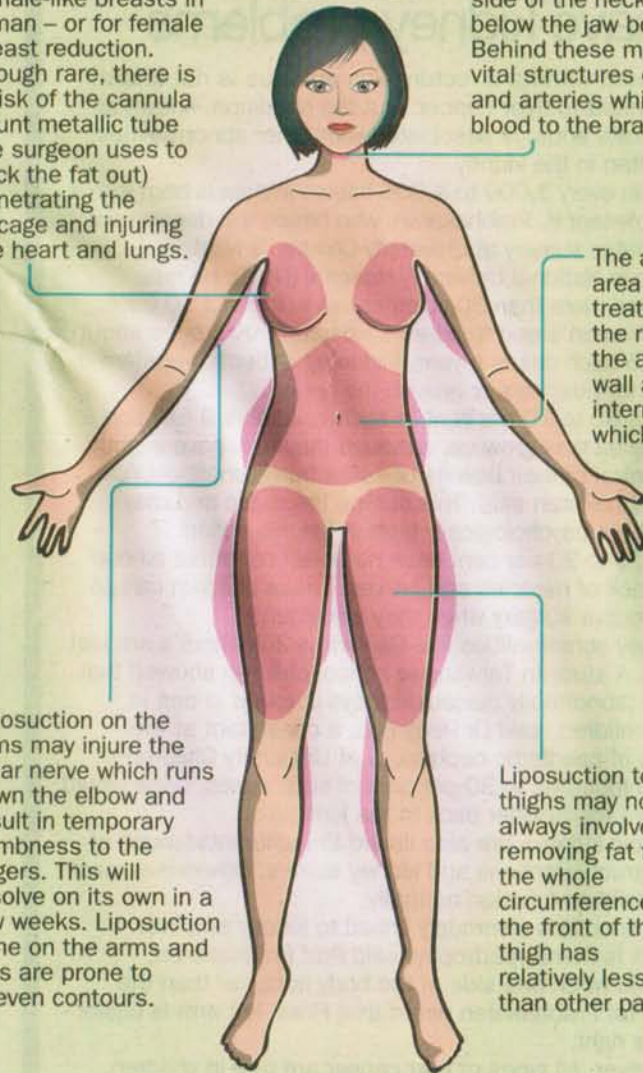


Where fat can be removed

Liposuction can be used to treat gynaecomastia – the development of female-like breasts in a man – or for female breast reduction. Though rare, there is a risk of the cannula (blunt metallic tube the surgeon uses to suck the fat out) penetrating the ribcage and injuring the heart and lungs.

FRONT VIEW



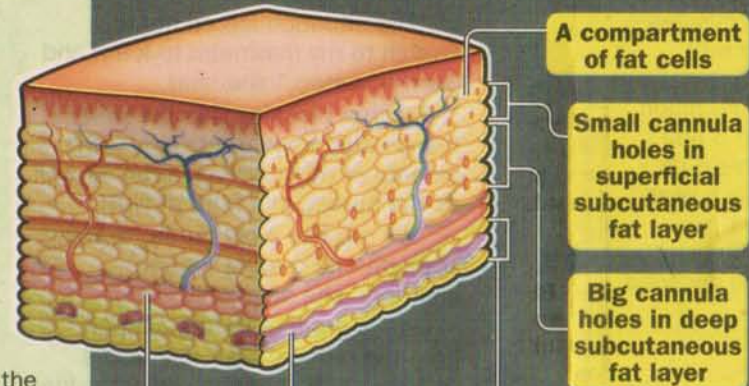
Doctors do not do liposuction in the area beyond the sternomastoid muscles located on each side of the neck just below the jaw bone. Behind these muscles are vital structures of veins and arteries which supply blood to the brain.

The abdomen is the area most commonly treated but there is the risk of perforating the abdominal muscle wall and injuring internal organs, which can be fatal.

Liposuction on the arms may injure the ulnar nerve which runs down the elbow and result in temporary numbness to the fingers. This will resolve on its own in a few weeks. Liposuction done on the arms and legs are prone to uneven contours.

Liposuction to the thighs may not always involve removing fat from the whole circumference as the front of the thigh has relatively less fat than other parts.

The different layers of fat



Liposuction removes subcutaneous fat, which lies directly under the skin and has no major blood vessels. It comprises a superficial layer and a deep layer.

Small cannulas, 2mm in diameter, are used to suck out the superficial layer of fat. Big cannulas, between 6 and 8mm in diameter, are used to remove the deep layer of fat.

BACK VIEW



Serious medical complications are rare when only the hips or flanks are treated.

Removing too much fat from the upper part of the buttocks may cause them to sag.

There is not much fat in the calves, leaving little margin for error.

NOTE: Liposuction cannot remove the visceral fat which surrounds the abdominal organs such as the stomach and intestines. This type of fat is not present in other parts of the body. Visceral fat, when in excess, increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Source: DR ANDREW KHOO, PLASTIC SURGEON AT MOUNT ELIZABETH MEDICAL CENTRE
Illustrations: ADAPTED FROM DR TAN YING CHIEN, PLASTIC SURGEON AT NOVENA MEDICAL CENTRE; LIPOSUCTION & AESTHETIC SURGERY BY GERALD H. PITMAN