



Matthew H. Steele, MD
Cosmetic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery

Liposuction Postoperative Instructions

First 24 hours:

You may have had liposuction in combination with another procedure, so some of these instructions are duplicates.

You will likely feel some soreness in the areas treated, as well as slightly tired from the anesthesia. Take your pain medicine every 4-6 hours as needed and the muscle relaxant (valium) every 8-12 hours. It is helpful to take a stool softener while on the pain pills to minimize your risk of constipation. Start your antibiotic (take with food) when you get home and continue as directed. Do not eat spicy foods or any dairy; these can upset your stomach and cause nausea and vomiting. Make sure you are comfortable and your nausea is controlled with the medicine (Phenergan or Zofran). Leave your dressings, foam pads, and garment in place. Make sure the foam pads stay flush to your skin and do not wrinkle or crease. The garment is vitally important to encourage skin shrinkage and resolution of swelling. You must wear it 24/7 for 4-6 weeks. Keep your activity to a minimal. Sponge bath only at this point. If applicable: empty your drains 2-3 x daily at the same time of day. Keep track of output (cc or ml) from each drain separately

Weeks 1-2:

Continue with restrictions as above. You will begin to feel better within 2-3 days. You may drive as long as you are not taking the narcotic pain pills or Valium. During this first week, you may switch to plain Tylenol or ibuprofen. A normal diet can be resumed. Activity restrictions include the following: no strenuous activity, no bending, no stooping, no lifting more than 10-15 pounds, and no cardio activity. Keep your blood pressure stable and the heart rate under 100 beats/minute. Slow walking and light household duties can be resumed. No sexual activity at this time. Sponge bath or navy shower keeping the water off the dressings. Continue wearing the foam pads and garment. You may clean the foam pads as needed and may take the garment off long enough to wash if it becomes soiled. Sutures and drains will be removed during one your postop appointments depending on what other procedures were performed in combination with liposuction. If liposuction alone was performed, you will be seen at 7-10 days after surgery.

Weeks 2-4:

You will begin to notice improvement in any bruising, but swelling takes much longer to resolve (3-6 months). Continue with activity restrictions and continue wearing the garment. After 3 weeks, you may remove the white foam pads if they are bothersome.



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Normal showers are allowed as long as all incisions are healing well and there are no drains.

Weeks 4-8:

Cardio activity and heavy lifting can be resumed. The original garment may start to feel too small, so you may need to purchase a second smaller garment. It is vitally important to continue wearing the garment for at least 2 months. Many patients will switch to a Spanx-type garment during the day and the surgical garment at night. Many patients will wear their garment longer than 2 months because they like the feeling of the tight compression.

Week 12 and beyond:

Most of the swelling is gone at this point, but you may notice some mild improvement up to 6 months. At this time it is usually safe to start shopping for new clothes, as most of your final result is evident. Continue with your diet and exercise regimen to maintain your new look.

When to call:

Hematoma- bleeding that cause significant asymmetry (2-3 x larger than the other side) or areas that bulge out significantly

Blood flow problem- skin turns blue/black

Fluid pocket- if you notice a soft, squishy area filled with fluid along the area treated

Wound separation- wound opens or is slow to heal

Infection- fever (temperature > 101.5F), redness, swelling, tenderness, white pus drainage