Flank and Waistline Liposuction Melbourne - Me Clinic

Canonical: https://www.meclinic.com.au/body/liposuction/love-handle/

Details:

The flanks - the sides of the waist, sometimes called love handles - are a common area of localised fat that is resistant to diet and exercise. Fat distribution in this area is influenced by genetics, age and hormonal factors, which is why targeted exercise often does not change it.

Liposuction removes fat from this area to produce a more proportionate waistline contour.

Who this is for

You have localised fat at the sides of the waist that has not shifted with diet and exercise

Your weight has been stable for at least six months

You are in good general health and within about 30 percent of your ideal body weight

Your skin over the area springs back rather than staying creased

You want proportion changed, not weight lost

Who it is not for

Anyone whose waist concern is mostly loose skin - common after pregnancy or major weight loss. An abdominoplasty is the relevant procedure, and liposuction alone will not deliver it.

Anyone whose abdominal fullness is firm and does not pinch. Fat you cannot pinch sits behind the muscle wall, around the organs, and liposuction cannot reach it. It responds to weight loss, not to surgery. This distinction disappoints more people at consultation than any other.

Anyone still losing weight, or planning a pregnancy.

Anyone expecting a defined waist that their frame does not have. Rib cage width and pelvic width set the outline; fat removal works within it.

What it addresses

Localised fat on the sides of the waist.

Bulges at the waistline that persist despite diet and exercise.

Disproportion between the waist and the rest of the torso.

Outcomes vary depending on individual anatomy, skin quality and the volume of fat removed. Individual results may vary.

What sits outside this procedure

Visceral fat - the firm fullness behind the muscle wall. Not reachable, and not what liposuction treats.

Separated abdominal muscles after pregnancy. That is a repair, not a fat question.

Loose skin. Abdominoplasty territory.

Your skeletal proportions. A wide-set rib cage or pelvis does not narrow.

Weight. Contouring, not weight loss.

Why targeted exercise does not shift this area

Side planks, oblique work and waist trainers are all commonly tried first. Muscle work strengthens the muscle underneath; it does not decide where the body stores or releases fat. That distribution is set by genetics, age and hormonal factors.

Which is not an argument against exercise - a stable weight is exactly what makes a liposuction result hold. It is an argument against expecting a particular exercise to empty a particular fat deposit.

What the procedure involves

The procedure typically requires only a small incision site, through which a cannula attached to a suction device removes the fat. It can be performed under local or general anaesthetic depending on the volume being removed and whether other areas are treated at the same time.

Some liposuction techniques stimulate collagen production during the process, which may contribute to a degree of skin tightening. This effect varies between individuals and should not be relied on where significant skin laxity is the primary concern.

See local or general anaesthesia .

The process, start to finish

GP referral - required since 1 July 2023 before seeing a surgeon about cosmetic surgery.

First consultation with a Specialist Plastic Surgeon, $350 including GST as at September 2024. The pinch test, the skin assessment, and a plain answer on whether liposuction is the right procedure for what you want changed.

Written quote and risk information to take home.

Second consultation - bring the questions that surfaced after the first.

Seven-day cooling-off period. Compulsory.

Booking and pre-operative instructions , including compression garment sizing.

Procedure day , usually same-day discharge.

Reviews at seven to ten days, six to eight weeks, three months, six months and twelve months.

Fat versus skin

Liposuction removes fat, not skin. Where there is significant loose skin around the waist and abdomen - common after major weight loss or pregnancy - an abdominoplasty may be the relevant procedure, either instead of or alongside liposuction. Your surgeon will assess this at consultation.

Suitability

A good candidate is in good general health with realistic expectations, has localised fat rather than general excess weight, and is at a stable weight. Liposuction is generally appropriate for people within about 30 percent of their ideal body weight.

The fat cells removed do not grow back, but the fat cells that remain can enlarge if weight is gained, so a stable weight matters to how long the result holds. Smokers have an increased risk of complications.

Circumstances that change the picture

After pregnancy. Skin laxity and muscle separation are both common, and neither is a fat problem. The assessment sorts out which of the three you actually have - often more than one.

After major weight loss. Skin quality is usually the limiting factor rather than remaining fat.

Men. The flanks are one of the most common male patterns, often treated together with the back rather than the abdomen, and the tissue tends to be firmer.

Anyone who has used a waist trainer regularly. Compression changes how the area looks temporarily; assess it after a few weeks without.

Costs

Flank and waistline liposuction falls within the general per-area surgeon's fee range of $4,000 to $8,000 for one area. Where the flanks are treated together with the abdomen, two-area pricing of $9,000 to $15,000 applies; the abdomen alone is around $9,000.

Hospital, theatre and anaesthetist fees are additional; anaesthetist fees range from $800 to $1,200 per hour where a general anaesthetic is used. As at September 2024 and including GST, a consultation with a Specialist Plastic Surgeon is $350.

See liposuction costs .

What a real quote names

Surgeon's fee, anaesthetist fee, hospital or theatre fee, compression garments, follow-up appointments, and what a revision would cost if one were needed - each on its own line, in writing. A single figure is not a quote.

Liposuction is also quoted on two bases across this site: a surgeon's fee per area, and a figure per hour of theatre time. They measure different things, and your written quote is the one that applies to you.

What you should leave the consultation with

The itemised written quote

Written risk information

Which areas you are being charged for, and where the boundary between flank and abdomen falls in your case

Whether local or general anaesthesia is proposed, and why

Your surgeon's name and AHPRA number - checkable at ahpra.gov.au

An after-hours number and who answers it

Your review dates

Recovery

You need someone to drive you home and stay with you for at least 24 hours where a general anaesthetic is used.

Compression garments are worn to reduce swelling and assist recovery.

Expect swelling and bruising, settling over the following weeks.

Avoid exercise for the first two weeks; gentle walking is encouraged.

Most people return to work after two to three weeks and to their usual exercise routine by around six weeks.

Domestic flights are usually fine at around two weeks; wait six to eight weeks for international flights and before swimming.

Recovery time varies depending on individual factors and the volume of fat removed. Most patients are seen at seven to ten days, then at six to eight weeks, three months, six months and twelve months.

Practical things specific to the waist

The garment sits exactly where your waistbands sit. Loose, soft, high-waisted clothing for several weeks. Buy it before, not during.

Sitting. A seatbelt and a firm chair both press on the treated area. Short trips first.

Twisting. Reaching into the back seat, loading a dishwasher, lifting a toddler - all use the treated area. Plan around them for a fortnight.

The garment has to be worn as instructed , including overnight. Compression is part of the result, not an optional comfort measure.

Aftercare: expected, and not expected

Expected: swelling, bruising that changes colour over two to three weeks, numbness or altered sensation that can take months to settle, firmness or lumpiness under the skin as it resolves, and fluid oozing from the small incisions in the first days.

Call us for a fever, increasing rather than settling pain, spreading redness or heat, pus or a bad smell from an incision, a wound that opens, or swelling suddenly worse on one side.

Call 000 for chest pain, shortness of breath, or pain and swelling in one calf.

How long the result lasts

The fat cells removed do not grow back. The cells that remain enlarge if weight is gained, so the contour follows your weight even though those cells are gone for good - and gaining after flank liposuction means storing it somewhere other than the flanks, not storing none of it.

The final contour is not visible for around three months, and refines for up to a year.

Risks and complications

All surgical procedures carry risks and potential complications, including infection, bruising, swelling, pain, scarring, bleeding and haematoma, seroma, contour irregularity, changes in sensation from nerve damage, anaesthesia complications and blood clots. Liposuction can be traumatic for internal organs, and visceral perforation, while uncommon, is a recognised risk.

Risks are discussed with you in detail during the consultation process, and you are given written information to take home. Please read our information on the risks and complications of cosmetic surgery before proceeding.

Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risks. Before proceeding you should seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.

Referral and cooling-off period

Since 1 July 2023, all patients are required to have a GP referral before seeing a plastic surgeon or doctor about cosmetic surgery. For any cosmetic surgery there is a compulsory one-week cooling-off period after your second consultation before surgery can be booked or a deposit paid.

Patients under 18 have additional requirements: a three-month cooling-off period and an independent assessment by a registered psychologist, psychiatrist or GP.

Common questions about flank and waistline liposuction

Why will side planks or core work not shift my love handles?

Because fat distribution in this area is influenced by genetics, age and hormonal factors rather than by how much the underlying muscle is worked. Targeted exercise strengthens muscle; it does not decide where your body stores or releases fat.

So is exercise pointless here?

No - a stable weight is exactly what makes a result hold. What is pointless is expecting a particular exercise to empty a particular fat deposit.

How do I know if my fat is even reachable?

Pinch it. Fat you can pinch sits under the skin and is what liposuction treats. Firm fullness you cannot pinch sits behind the muscle wall, around the organs, and no amount of liposuction reaches it - that responds to weight loss.

Will it tighten the skin around my waist?

Some techniques stimulate collagen production during the procedure, which may contribute to a degree of tightening. That effect varies between individuals and should not be relied on where significant skin laxity is the primary concern - in that case an abdominoplasty may be the relevant procedure, instead of or alongside liposuction.

I have had children. Is this the right procedure for me?

Possibly, but skin laxity and muscle separation are both common after pregnancy and neither is a fat problem. The assessment sorts out which of the three you have - frequently more than one.

Will it give me a defined waist?

Within your own proportions. Rib cage width and pelvic width set the outline, and fat removal works inside it rather than changing it.

Are the flanks and the abdomen charged as one area or two?

Two. One area falls within the $4,000-$8,000 surgeon's fee range; flanks treated together with the abdomen attract two-area pricing of $9,000-$15,000, with the abdomen alone around $9,000. Hospital, theatre and anaesthetist fees are additional.

What should the written quote name?

Surgeon's fee, anaesthetist fee, hospital or theatre fee, compression garments, follow-ups, and the cost of a revision if one were needed. A single figure is not a quote.

Local or general anaesthetic?

It depends on the volume being removed and whether other areas are treated at the same time. Anaesthetist fees run $800 to $1,200 per hour where a general anaesthetic is used.

Will the fat come back?

The fat cells removed do not grow back, but the cells that remain can enlarge if you gain weight. A stable weight is what determines how long the result holds.

Am I a suitable candidate?

Good general health, realistic expectations, localised fat rather than general excess weight, and a stable weight - generally within about 30 percent of your ideal body weight. Smokers have an increased risk of complications.

How long should my weight have been stable?

At least six months.

How long until I can work and exercise?

Most people return to work after two to three weeks. Avoid exercise for the first two weeks, with gentle walking encouraged, and expect to be back to your usual routine by around six weeks. Recovery time varies with the volume of fat removed.

What should I plan around at home?

Twisting movements - reaching into the back seat, loading a dishwasher, lifting a toddler - all use the treated area, for about a fortnight. Buy loose high-waisted clothing beforehand, because the garment sits exactly where waistbands sit.

Do I really have to wear the compression garment overnight?

Yes, as instructed. Compression is part of the result, not an optional comfort measure.

When can I fly or swim?

Domestic flights are usually fine at around two weeks. Wait six to eight weeks for international flights and before swimming.

When will I see the real result?

The contour is not final for around three months and refines for up to a year.

What is normal afterwards?

Swelling, bruising that changes colour over two to three weeks, numbness or altered sensation that can take months to settle, firmness or lumpiness under the skin, and fluid oozing from the incisions in the first days.

When should I call us?

Fever, increasing rather than settling pain, spreading redness or heat, pus or a bad smell from an incision, a wound that opens, or swelling suddenly worse on one side.

When should I call 000?

Chest pain, shortness of breath, or pain and swelling in one calf.

What are the risks?

Infection, bruising, swelling, pain, scarring, bleeding and haematoma, seroma, contour irregularity, changes in sensation from nerve damage, anaesthesia complications and blood clots. Liposuction can also be traumatic for internal organs, and visceral perforation, while uncommon, is a recognised risk.

What has to happen before I can book?

A GP referral, required since 1 July 2023, then a compulsory one-week cooling-off period after your second consultation. Under 18s have a three-month cooling-off period and an independent psychological assessment.

Can I check my surgeon's registration?

Yes - by name at ahpra.gov.au, in about a minute.

Related pages

See liposuction , back liposuction , tummy tuck surgery , or liposuction costs .

Individual results may vary. Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risks. Before proceeding you should seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner.