

WEIRD SENSATIONS

Starting about 1-2 weeks after surgery and lasting up to 6-10 weeks, a range of sensations that are all associated with nerves waking up can be extremely unpleasant, including itching, “tingling”, “tiny electrical shocks”, “bee stings”, “insects crawling under the skin”, “pins and needles”, “shooting pains”. Some patients complain about intense hot flushes. The feeling that your limbs have turned into solid blocks of wood is uncomfortable but is another passing phase. Numbness is very common and can be very disconcerting. Unfortunately there appears to be no magic cure for any of these symptoms, you just have to get through this period - generally almost all of these sensations will have disappeared or dramatically reduced about 12 weeks post-op.

Dealing with the unusual sensations:

- For the itching - take antihistamines (e.g. piriton), use aloe vera gel on affected areas but avoid the cannula wounds; and/or use ice-packs to reduce the itch.
- Massage your “solid” limbs, gently but firmly every day.
- Exercise is the best way to manage all of these symptoms. Start gently and build up slowly giving yourself small goals to reach each day. Swim only when all your wounds have healed.
- Use a fan to keep you cool during hot flushes.
- There is nothing you can do for numbness but wait for sensation to return.

COMPRESSION GARMENTS

Essential to help get post-operative fluid out of your limbs and to help shape them, these garments are torture to remove and re-apply in the first few days after surgery, particularly following surgery on the lower legs.

Managing your compression garments:

Julie Cunneen (specialist nurse) will give you specific guidance for what to do and when to do it, the general rule is wear the garments 24/7 (except when showering) for 7-14 days; then during the day only for at least three months.

- If you can, get help from your partner/friend when removing and applying these garments, especially for the first few days after surgery. Warning - prepare whoever is helping you for the fact that you are likely to scream like a banshee or at the very least yelp quietly!
- Consider buying an application aid (Easy-slide or similar) to help you get into your compression.
- Remove compression garments about 30 minutes after taking painkillers, especially in the first week after surgery and rest for 10-15 minutes before leaping into the shower to let your blood pressure stabilize.

In ALL cases where you are concerned about a symptom you are experiencing post-operatively you should contact a Doctor for guidance.



Patient to Patient

HINTS and TIPS for patients considering tumescent liposuction under general anaesthetic for management of lipoedema

The hints and tips in this booklet have been compiled by patients to deal with the post-operative symptoms experienced after liposuction.

The suggestions given are not designed to replace medical recommendations.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Do your research thoroughly before agreeing to surgery. Consider seeing more than one surgeon for their opinion on the best approach to manage your lipoedema. Some surgeons operate under local anaesthetic, some under general anaesthetic. There are pros and cons for both approaches. All of Dr Dancey's operations are performed under general anaesthetic.

Ask the surgeons you see as many questions as you need to. Consider joining on-line patient forums to interact directly with patients who have had surgery.

Read thoroughly all the documentation provided by your surgeon and/or hospital at which you will be having the surgery.

Contact Dr Anne Dancey directly if you have any concerns that have not been addressed before your operation.

PAIN - IT HURTS, A LOT

There is no getting around the fact that you are going to feel pain, in some cases that pain is going to be so severe that you cannot sleep. The worst time is generally between 3-10 days post-op.

Dealing with the pain:

- Take your painkillers as prescribed, don't try to be a hero.
- Take painkillers about 30 minutes before you go to bed and when removing or applying compression.
- Listen to your body; don't overdo it in the early days after surgery. Walking is great for getting the lymphatic system working but don't exhaust yourself.
- Rest as much as you can, if you have had leg liposuction make sure your legs are elevated whenever possible.
- Getting out of a soft chair after liposuction on your thighs is at best comical. Try and sit in an armchair so that you have support to push against as you stand.
- Use an inflatable rubber ring on the toilet to minimize pain on thighs following upper leg surgery.
- Use pillows and cushions to support yourself and make yourself as comfortable in bed as possible. A "maternity pillow" is a great investment.
- Make sure that there are no creases in your compression garments, particularly around ankles, knees or elbows.

SWELLING

It takes months for the post-operative swelling to go down and for you to see the eventual shape and size of your arms or legs. Immediately after surgery your limbs will look much smaller but then the swelling starts and it takes weeks for the fluid to be fully absorbed.

Try and be patient, this surgery is not a quick-fix!

- Take regular exercise as soon as you feel up to it – gentle walking, Nordic walking, swimming and stretching.
- Follow a good nutritional diet; consider following an anti-inflammatory diet long-term (a diet that is high in omega-3 rich foods and antioxidants).
- **Drink plenty of fluids.**

BRUISING

Expect hideous bruising that starts to develop in earnest on Day 2-3 and may be present for a few weeks.

Managing the bruising:

- Flexible ice-packs or packets of frozen peas applied for 10 minutes at a time, take the packs off for 20 minutes then re-apply for 10 minutes and so on (this helps reduce pain too).
- Wear your compression garments as instructed.
- Apply Arnica gel, St John's Wort Oil or Vitamin K cream to the bruises daily.