

Ask the Plastic Surgeons

By Dr. Wendell Smoot and Dr. John Smoot

Q. *I've heard a lot about liposuction as a means to reduce excess fat; what other procedures are available to prepare for the upcoming swimsuit season?*

A. We receive a lot of inquiries this time of year for a variety of figure enhancing procedures that we refer to as a "Summer Tune Up". One of the most popular procedures is liposuction. Liposuction as a way of refining the body's silhouette that uses specialized suction equipment to remove small areas of fat from the hips, buttocks, neck, thighs, or just about any other area of the body. The recovery time is generally within three to six weeks depending on the area treated and patients' individual healing process. After targeted areas of fat have been removed, patients notice that their body features appear to be more in proportion with each other and lumps and bumps give way to smooth contours, improving the fit of swimwear.



Another procedure we perform that often accompanies liposuction for a very natural result is a mini-tuck, which focuses on the midsection area. It's less invasive than a traditional abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) using a smaller incision and requiring less down time. We treat a lot of male patients at this time of year to reduce the excess fat known as "love handles" around the waist, as well as women who want to reduce a protruding tummy. Good candidates for a mini-tuck include patients who have reached their weight loss goal, yet retain localized fullness in the lower abdomen, as well as patients who have weakened abdominal muscles or excess skin due to aging, weight loss, or pregnancy. An incision is made horizontally across the lower abdomen and in most cases, the scar from this incision can be hidden by underwear and swimsuit bottoms. After excess fat is removed, the surgeon tightens the abdominal muscles, secures them in their new positions and tightens the skin. The mini tuck involves less muscle repositioning and skin removal than a traditional tummy tuck, but your physician will know which procedure you are best suited for.

A third procedure we often perform in the Summer Tune Up series is a less-invasive facelift that our practice has developed called the Fresh LiftSM, which requires much smaller incisions than a full facelift. An ideal candidate for this procedure would be someone in their forties or fifties who is not quite ready for a full face and neck lift, but is starting to notice some sagging in the jowl area. Along with the advantage of a shorter scar, this surgery usually has a shorter recovery period compared to a full facelift. People who find that weight loss, aging, and natural sun damage have caused the skin on their face and neck to sag may benefit from this procedure.

John Smoot, MD, FACS, is Chief of Plastic Surgery at Scripps Memorial Hospital-La Jolla and Wendell Smoot, MD, FACS, has been voted by his peers as Top Doctor by San Diego Magazine for the past five consecutive years. Their plastic surgery practice was established 21 years ago and both physicians are individually board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Either physician can be reached at www.smootmd.com or (858) 587-9850.