plastetik

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PATIENT INFORMATION

# Lipedema

Everything important about the treatment, preparation, the day of surgery and healing – to read at your leisure and as a basis for your consultation.

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# Lipedema – liposuction for diseased fatty tissue

Lipedema is a disease, not a matter of discipline. Liposuction is the only effective method for removing the diseased fatty tissue – and can noticeably relieve symptoms.

| CONDITION | TREATMENT | ANESTHESIA | AFTERCARE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fat distribution disorder | Liposuction | General anesthesia with tumescence | Compression, lymphatic drainage |

Many women with lipedema have come a long way: diets, exercise, the experience that their legs or arms still do not get slimmer – and often the accusation of not trying hard enough. Yet this is a distinct disease of the fatty tissue.

## What is lipedema?

In lipedema, the subcutaneous fatty tissue increases pathologically, typically symmetrically on the legs and hips, and often on the arms as well. The hands and feet are usually spared. Almost exclusively women are affected; the disease often begins in phases of hormonal change such as puberty, pregnancy or menopause.

Typical signs are:

- a disproportion between a slim upper body and noticeably heavier legs or arms
- feelings of tension and pain on pressure in the affected tissue
- a marked tendency to bruise
- a feeling of heaviness that increases over the course of the day
- diet and exercise have hardly any effect on the affected regions

The diagnosis is made by a doctor after an examination. Not every fuller figure is lipedema – and not every case of lipedema needs surgery.

## Lipedema, lymphedema or excess weight?

The distinction is important because the treatment differs. Lipedema is not caused by excess weight, but it can be worsened by it. In **lymphedema**, tissue fluid accumulates; unlike in lipedema, the back of the foot and the toes are often swollen, and the skin over the toes is difficult to lift

(Stemmer's sign). In a **pure fat distribution disorder**, pain and tenderness to pressure are absent. The diagnosis is based on medical history, examination and palpation findings.

## Stages

| Stage | Skin surface | Subcutaneous fatty tissue |
|---|---|---|
| I | smooth | thickened with fine nodules |
| II | uneven, wavy | coarse nodules |
| III | deforming lobes | greatly increased, overhanging |

The stages describe the appearance – not necessarily the severity of the symptoms.

## Conservative treatment

Treatment usually begins with conservative therapy: custom-made flat-knit compression garments, manual lymphatic drainage, regular exercise – especially in water –, a stable weight and good skin care. It relieves symptoms but cannot remove the diseased fatty tissue.

## Liposuction for lipedema

Liposuction is the only effective method for removing diseased fatty tissue in lipedema. Even during my training, liposuction for medical reasons in lipedema was just as much a part of it as aesthetic procedures.

I work with general anesthesia in combination with tumescent local anesthesia, as well as with vibration techniques and thin cannulas that protect the tissue – and especially the lymphatic vessels. With pronounced findings, it is often advisable to treat in several sessions.

## Procedure

01 **Diagnosis and medical history**
We talk about your symptoms, previous therapies and your goals.

02 **Planning**
I determine which regions are treated in which order – in several steps if necessary.

03 **Surgery**
General anesthesia with tumescence, gentle suction with vibration technique.

04 **Aftercare**
Compression, lymphatic drainage and regular check-ups.

## Coverage of costs

Under certain conditions, liposuction for lipedema can be covered by German statutory health insurance. The rules on this have changed several times in recent years and depend, among other things, on the stage and on prior treatment. For private insurance, the respective policy terms apply. We clarify this on a case-by-case basis – and you submit the application before treatment begins.

## Risks

The risks basically correspond to those of liposuction: bruising, seromas, infections, sensory disturbances and unevenness of the skin. With larger volumes, careful monitoring and aftercare are particularly important.

## Frequently asked questions

**Do I have to continue wearing compression after surgery?**
Immediately after the procedure, yes, for several weeks. Whether and for how long compression is needed afterwards depends on the findings. Many patients are able to reduce it over time.

**Can lipedema come back?**
The removed fatty tissue does not grow back. However, lipedema is a chronic disease; it can progress in untreated regions or with hormonal changes.

**How many operations are necessary?**
That depends on the severity and extent. Legs and arms are often treated in separate sessions.

**Is lipedema the same as cellulite?**
No. Cellulite is a harmless change in the skin surface. Lipedema is a disease of the fatty tissue with pain and tenderness to pressure.

### Can I get rid of lipedema through exercise?

Exercise relieves symptoms and is very important, but as a rule, the pathologically increased fat cells do not disappear as a result.

PART 2 · THE PROCESS STEP BY STEP

BODY · PROCESS

# Lipedema liposuction – the process step by step

The treatment of lipedema is often a journey in several stages. This is how it typically proceeds – from diagnosis to aftercare.

| SESSIONS | ANESTHESIA | COMPRESSION | AFTERCARE |
|---|---|---|---|
| often several | General anesthesia + tumescence | several weeks | Compression, lymphatic drainage |

Lipedema is not about correcting the figure, but about treating a disease. That is why it starts with the diagnosis – and ends with careful aftercare. The steps show the **typical** process.

## The process at a glance

01

WEEKS TO MONTHS BEFOREHAND

### Diagnosis & planning

Diagnosis, previous conservative therapy, planning of regions and stages, clarification of costs.

02

ONE DAY OF SURGERY PER STAGE

### Surgery

Liposuction under general anesthesia with tumescence, performed gently along the direction of the lymphatic vessels.

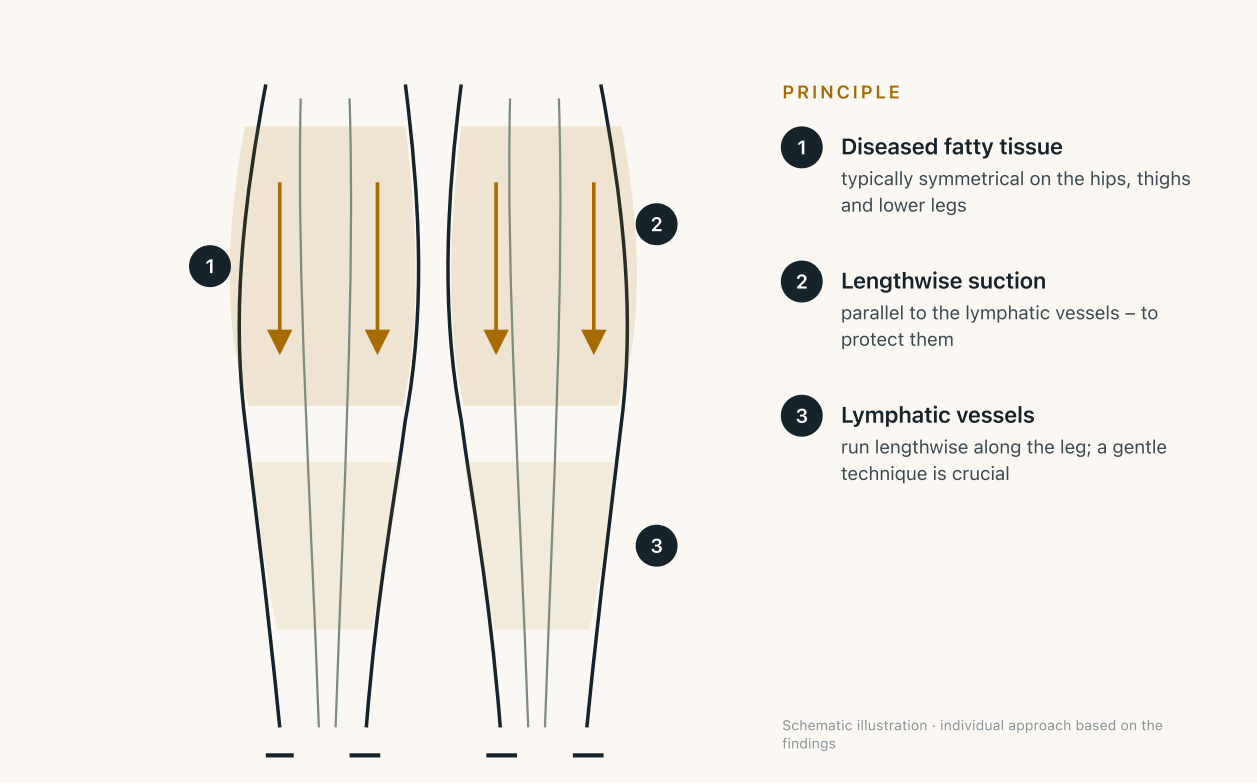
03

WEEKS TO MONTHS

### Aftercare

Compression, lymphatic drainage, exercise, check-ups.

## What happens during surgery




Schematic illustration. Regions and order are planned individually.

## Phase 1: Diagnosis and planning

01 **Diagnosis**
Symptoms, distribution of the fatty tissue and medical history are assessed by a doctor.

02 **Conservative therapy**
Compression, lymphatic drainage and exercise – they relieve symptoms but do not remove the tissue.

03 **Stages**
With pronounced findings, regions (e.g. legs and arms) are often treated in separate sessions.

04 **Question of costs**
Clarify before starting whether coverage of costs is possible – you submit the application before treatment.

05 **Compression garments**
fitted in advance.

## Phase 2: The day of surgery

01 **Marking**
The regions to be treated are marked while you are standing.

02 **Anesthesia and tumescence**
General anesthesia with tumescent local anesthesia.

03 **Suction**
With vibration techniques and thin cannulas – lengthwise, parallel to the lymphatic vessels, to protect them.

04 **Compression**
Immediately after the procedure.

05 **Monitoring**
With larger volumes, careful monitoring after the procedure is particularly important.

## Phase 3: Aftercare

### Day 1–3

Swelling and a feeling of tension; compression day and night

### Week 1–2

Lymphatic drainage as prescribed; light movement

### Week 3–6

Continue compression as instructed; gradually increase activity

### Month 3–6

Check-up; planning of the next stage, if intended

### long term

Compression can often be reduced depending on the findings; exercise remains important

Contact us immediately in case of fever, severe pain, shortness of breath, a leg severely swollen on one side or redness around an access point.

## Your checklist

- Bring documents on your diagnosis and previous therapy
- Clarify coverage of costs before starting
- Have compression garments fitted in advance
- Schedule lymphatic drainage appointments for the time after surgery

## Your next step

Nothing can replace a personal consultation. There I answer your questions and together we clarify what makes sense for you.

**Book online:** www.plastetik.de/en/appointment/
**Phone:** +49 89 987855 · **Email:** info@dr-woerl.de
**More information:** www.plastetik.de/en/lipedema/

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**Important note:** This information is for general education and does not replace a personal medical consultation and informed-consent discussion. Procedures, time frames and healing courses are typical values and may vary individually. A specific result cannot be promised.

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