

Lipoedema Guide

 Naveen Somia Plastic Surgery



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Sydney - Bondi Junction & Bella Vista



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Specialist Plastic Surgeon



Dr Somia has been successfully treating patients with lipoedema since 2013 and after training with Dr Josef Stutz in Germany in 2016 has been performing water assisted liposuction for lipoedema at Lakeview Private Hospital in Bella Vista, Sydney Australia.

Dr Somia trained in Sydney, Melbourne and the US and is a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (FRACS), President of The Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ASAPS) and a member of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS). He recently celebrated his 12th year in private practice.

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What is Lipoedema?

There is no simple blood test or scan to diagnose Lipoedema and presentation varies from person to person so diagnosis is made by history & physical examination.

See <https://www.lipedema.org/staging> for lipoedema staging information.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- Legs are enlarged bilaterally and symmetrically (arms can also be affected)
- Waist is small in proportion to the thighs, buttocks and legs
- Fat deposition is bilateral and symmetric
- Fat deposits are seen in the thighs and legs with NO involvement of the feet
- 30% of patients have arms and forearms involved with NO involvement of the hands
- There appears a 'cuff' around the ankle and a round pad of fat just below the knees
- Waist is small in proportion to the hips, thighs, buttocks and legs
- Feet /hands are exempt and a 'cuff' or "bracelet" effect can appear just above the ankles /wrists.
- Legs are painful to touch
- Legs are cold
- Evidence of dilated veins and bruising is commonly seen
- The fat is soft to touch, wobbly and cold
- The skin is always involved in Lipoedema and skin has a cellulite appearance

HISTORY

- Legs bruise easily
- Legs feel heavy at the end of the day
- The first sign of fat deposition in the thighs occur following the hormonal changes of puberty.
- Pregnancy and menopause are two other periods where significant fat deposition and worsening of symptoms is noted.
- It is a matter of great frustration and confusion that exercise or diet have no effect on reducing the fat in lipoedema.
- Strong Family History of Lipoedema mainly affecting females though rare cases of it affecting males has been reported. You may inherit this from either side of your family.



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Conservative Treatments

*Patients who proactively
treat lipoedema
with conservative methods
respond better to surgery*

Eat Well For Health

Eat well & keep well hydrated. A low inflammation calorie controlled eating plan is beneficial. Read "The Lymphedema & Lipedema Nutrition Guide" by Ehrlichk, Iker, Herbst, etc. Nutrition is not one size fits all so you may need to trial different eating plans to find the right fit. You may also find it beneficial to consult a nutritionist. Stop smoking as soon as possible.

Skin Health

Look after your skin keeping it well hydrated. Regular moisturising will help skin to stay healthy and lowers risk of wounds and infections.

Movement

Keep moving. Movement is important for mobility. Low impact activities such as walking, aqua aerobics, yoga and weights are beneficial to reduce fluid buildup, boost mobility, and maintain how well your legs work. Finding something you enjoy will make maintenance easier.

Consult a Lipoedema Therapist

A Lipoedema Therapist can help you with compression garments, manual lymphatic drainage and other conservative treatments.

Wearing compression garments is important in the maintenance of lipoedema to reduce swelling and to encourage the flow of the lymphatic fluids. It is recommended to wear compression on a daily basis and whilst this may seem daunting at first, you will soon see the benefits. Your therapist will advise which garments are best for you. However, for pre surgery we recommend custom full leg flat knit compression garments (Class 2).

Conservative treatments with a therapist include Manual Lymphatic Drainage to remove excess fluid and help break up fibrosis. MLD is a gentle form of massage to the connective tissues immediately below the skin to stimulate lymph flow and drainage and helps with pain and swelling. Another option is Endermologie which re-activates cellular activity and improves circulation. In the meantime, you may find the home program listed in the resource page helpful. You may also find benefit from using a vibration plate at home. Please see resources pages for more information on therapists.



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Resources



For more information on conservative treatments and lifestyle see lipoedemaaustralia.com.au, lipedema.org, fatdisorders.org. Lipedema Giving Smarter Guide: philanthropy.milkeninstitute.org/lipedema/



Lipoedema podcast: Dermhealth.co - Podcast No 25.
Raising Awareness for Lipoedema with Dr Naveen Somia of
Australasian Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons

Information for GPs: <https://praxhub.com/education/a-gps-guide-to-lipoedema-and-how-to-differentiate-from-lymphoedema/>

SYDNEY THERAPISTS:

Mish Kent - 0448 099 455

Grace Lowther - 0455 110 888

Carol Morris - 9911 7200

Lisa Higgins - 0410 363 720

Kylie Hendy - 0402 736 662

Olivia Cimadevilla - 9388 0017

Home MLD program : naturaltherapypages.com.au/connect/lisahiggins/vides.

MELBOURNE THERAPISTS:

Helen Eason - 0431 704 883

Lucy Melican - 0420290673

Lauren Rotar- 0426 903 653

For other therapists please see lymphoedemasc.com.au

SYDNEY GARMENT FITTING:

Cosmac Artarmon - http://cosmac.com.au/pdf/cosmac_fitting_centres.html

OAPL Alexandria 02 9319 1955

Garnetmedical.com.au



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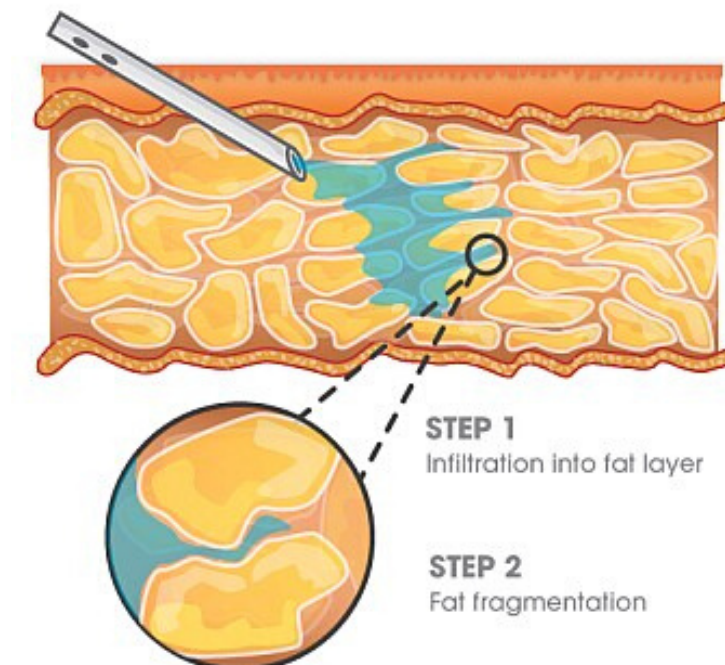
SURGICAL TREATMENT

What is the role of Liposuction in Lipoedema?

The aim of liposuction in the treatment of lipoedema is to remove stubborn fat, limit disability, slow disease progression, avoid permanent lymphatic dysfunction and may assist in the reduction of pain symptoms. As of today, Liposuction is the only method proven to safely remove the 'Lipoedema Fat'. It is important to note that liposuction for Lipoedema provides a form of control but not a definitive cure. The best results are seen in patients who are proactive and diligent with all conservative treatments methods before and after surgery.

What is Water Assisted Liposuction?

Water Assisted Liposuction is a precise and gentle liposuction technique where the cannula that sucks fat tissue out has an attached waterjet that separates and removes the fat cells from the surrounding tissues with less damage to lymphatics.



Prepare for Surgery

Preparation for Water Assisted Liposuction starts 3-6 months before surgery.

To get the most out of your procedure Dr Somia recommends a minimum of 3 months of conservative treatment including:

- An eating plan targeted at lipoedema to reduce inflammation
- Moisturise your skin daily
- Daily Movement - aqua aerobics, yoga, weights, walking,
- Manual Lymphatic Drainage - co-ordinate with a lipoedema therapist
- Wear FULL leg custom compression garments daily- co-ordinate with a lipoedema therapist
- Daily use of LX9 machine for a minimum of 4-6 weeks to soften fat before surgery and maintain lymphatics. You will continue to use the LX9 for 6-8 weeks after surgery. You can rent the LX9 from medirent.com.au/products/compression-pumps/lx-9/. Please see Dr Somia's LX9 protocol.
- Stop drinking and smoking 6 weeks before surgery.

Note: It is important to wear properly fitted garments on all the areas you will have liposuction for a minimum of 3 months prior to surgery. Generally for lipoedema surgery FULL leg compression is required. Knee or thigh length is not recommended for surgery preparation. We will provide 2 x Medical Z post-operative surgical garments on the day of surgery. You will wake up in a garment.

Dr Somia may also ask you to get clearance for surgery from any specialists involved in your care. We will ask you to have a blood test and an ECG a few weeks before surgery to ensure you are otherwise healthy.

Commence Arnica or Bromelian tablets from the chemist one week before to help with bruising and inflammation. Take as directed.

Water Assisted Liposuction - You may experience water/blood leakage in the first 24-48 hours following surgery. To prepare for this event, purchase a waterproof cover for your bed and gauze/absorbent pads to carry with you. Take a towel with you to hospital for your return trip home to save the car seats from the leakage.

Co-ordinate with your lipoedema therapist for treatment post surgery.



What To Expect During Recovery

- Expect to stay overnight at Lakeview Private Hospital in Bella Vista, Sydney. Follow the instructions from the hospital and Dr Somia. Take pain medications and antibiotics as instructed. Do not drive or work for 24 hours after surgery.
- Wear your garment 24/7 except for showering (you can shower in the garment - it will dry off relatively quickly). We recommend wearing the post operative surgical garment for a few days after the surgery before reverting to your custom flat knits provided your flat knits fit you. If they do not fit keep wearing the post operative surgical garment until you receive your new custom compression. The garment helps the fluid drain, minimises bruising and holds your skin in place while it reattaches to the underlying tissue. Best results are achieved when compression is worn for 12 months following surgery.
- You will see Dr Somia one week following surgery and at regular intervals for the next few months. If you are not local to Sydney organise to see your GP around the one week mark for a wound review. We will also keep in contact via phone and email (including photographs) so Dr Somia can monitor your progress.
- Co-ordinate with your lipoedema therapist before your surgery to arrange treatment post surgery.

WALK, REST, HYDRATE, REPEAT: Keep moving, increase fluids. Walking speeds up drainage, reduces inflammation and aids healing. Increase activity gradually and maintain your measurement diary.

DRESSINGS: It is normal for your dressings to be soaked from the blood tinged liposuction fluid in the following days. You can have a quick shower however you should not soak or be fully immersed in water for at least 2 weeks following surgery. Your wounds will initially be covered by a waterproof dressing. If this dressing gets wet remove it and gently pat the wound dry and cover with a fresh dressing. You can wear your garments in the shower as they dry relatively quickly or you can remove it for showering purposes only.

SWELLING AND BRUISING: You will swell to your original size or even larger. This will peak at 3-5 days and then begin to subside. You may also experience swelling and bruising in the ankles and genitals. Swelling takes 6-12 weeks to subside.

ITCHING, NUMBNESS AND TINGLING: Itching of the treated areas is normal and indicates healing. Numbness and tingling is also normal and in most cases resolves in 3 months.

DRAINAGE: Most stops in 24-48 hours. You may find it helpful to carry absorbent pads.

CONSTIPATION/MENSTRUAL CYCLES: Removal of the fat cells may result in constipation, loose or fatty stools and a more intense period.



Faq's

WHEN WILL I SEE RESULTS? Lipoedema patients respond differently to liposuction compared to non lipoedema patients and recovery times vary. It cannot be guaranteed that removal of fat will translate to improved symptoms, improved mobility, a better contour or an aesthetic improvement. Because the skin is involved in lipoedema, a cosmetic outcome is difficult to achieve. "Final results may not be visible for 12-18 months"- Dr J Stutz.

WILL I NEED ADDITIONAL SURGERY? This depends on the degree of treatment required and the areas that you would like treated. There is a limit to the amount of fat that can be removed in one surgery safely. Over the years Dr Somia has found 4 hours to be an appropriately safe surgery duration for patients. You can discuss this further during consultation based on what your individual needs are. Sometimes, following surgery skin doesn't spring back and this may require an additional procedure.

WHAT IS THE COST? As a guide the total cost for 4 hours of water assisted liposuction including Dr Somia, specialist anaesthetist, overnight hospital stay, theatre, immediate post operative garments, pre and post surgery pathology testing and 6 months aftercare is approximately \$18,000.

CAN I CLAIM FROM MEDICARE/FUND OR USE MY SUPER? Unfortunately, at this time Liposuction treatment for lipoedema is considered by medicare and health funds a cosmetic procedure and cannot be claimed. Some patients have however had success in accessing their superannuation fund. Please note this withdrawal of super is considered to be income and is taxed accordingly. Please consider this option carefully before applying.

Next Steps

Do you have more questions or would like to schedule a time to see Dr Somia? Please call us on 02 9387 2110 or email info@naveensomia.com.au.

An initial consultation is \$350 and you can claim \$75 back from medicare if you have a referral from your GP. You will need a credit card to book. If you live outside Sydney an initial phone consultation can be arranged to get the ball rolling (based from your photos and diagnosis/treatment history). The cost for a phone consultation is \$100 (no rebate is available). Please note you will need to see Dr Somia in person before any formal treatment. For information to give your GP please see the resources page.

We hope you found this information helpful. We look forward to seeing you soon.

