

Lipofilling

Lipofilling is a technique used to create a permanent filler effect by moving fat from either the abdomen or thighs and re-injecting, usually into the face, to replace volume in the cheek, chin, or improve wrinkles and creases in the face. It can either be done on its own or in combination with other surgical procedures such as face and neck lift. Done on its own it is possible to perform the procedure under local anaesthetic as a day case, but is usually performed under general anaesthetic.

Preoperative advice

The aims and expectations of surgery will have been discussed at consultation. Smokers have a high risk of developing complications, in particular wound healing and re-absorption and it is therefore advised that patients should refrain from smoking at least six weeks prior, and between two to four weeks following surgery.

Aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs should be avoided for at least the week before surgery and a week after surgery to help reduce the amount of bleeding and bruising.

What happens before the operation: You will have been seen by Mr. Whitworth in the Out-Patient Department where the details regarding surgery will have been fully discussed. On the day of surgery you are admitted to hospital and seen by Mr. Whitworth and a consent form will be signed and pre-operative photographs taken.

Operative procedure: Small incisions, less than 1 cm, are made in either the abdomen or inner thigh from where the fat will be harvested. This is done using a low pressure liposuction technique. Small dressings are placed on these wounds and occasionally an absorbable suture is used to close them. The fat that has been harvested from this area is re-injected into the required areas of the face again using tiny 3 – 4 mm. stab incisions which are covered with a Steri-strip sticking plaster.

The operation for lipofilling alone usually takes between 45 minutes and 1 hour and the patient is required to stay in hospital for a few hours following surgery to make sure there is not excessive bruising or swelling.

What to expect following surgery

There may well be areas of numbness which can be caused by the swelling and also injection of local anaesthetic which will be performed even if the patient has had a general anaesthetic. There will be small dressings on each of the areas treated and there will be some swelling and bruising in both the harvest site and the injection site.

Restrictions: Patients are advised to avoid any heavy lifting or carrying out any heavy housework for at least a week following surgery and should only drive if they are comfortable and safe to do so.

Follow up: Patients are usually reviewed by the nursing staff for a wound check 7 days following surgery and Mr. Whitworth will review the patient at 1 and 4 months post-operatively. It is usual to over-correct any wrinkles or lines on the face and in the initial week there will be swelling which exaggerates the effect of the surgery. The final effect is not apparent until up to 4 weeks.

Risks and complications

As with all surgery complications can occur. Initially, the main problems are bruising and swelling. If there is significant bruising then a return to the operating theatre on the night of surgery may be required although this is very rare. Wound infections are uncommon but there can be some alteration in the sensation in the face but that normally resolves after couple of weeks. Fortunately, in a vast majority of cases complications are rare.

On occasions the amount of fat absorbed on the face results in an under correction of the defect and in these cases a revisional procedure may be required. Because of the swelling and the scarring under the skin, the final result cannot be assessed for at least a month and, therefore, any revisional surgery would be deferred until after this period.

As with all cosmetic surgical procedures undertaken by Mr. Whitworth there is a fixed fee policy which means that no further charges are incurred should patients develop a complication and there are no further charges for one revisional procedure. This fixed fee policy expires after one year.