Lipomodelling in Breast Surgery

What is it?
Lipomodelling or fat grating (sometimes called lipofilling or fat transfer) is a procedure used to improve the contour of a reconstructed breast or to augment (increase the size) the breasts. The procedure is minimally invasive and involves taking fat from elsewhere in the body and injecting it into the areas that require it. The result can give a soft, natural appearance.

How is it done?
Fat is taken from your own body, often the abdomen, thighs, buttocks or hips, in a procedure called liposuction (a term also applied into cosmetic fat reduction). This is done through small incisions in the skin. The removed fat is then concentrated and grafted with great care and in small amounts into the area to be treated. This procedure is usually performed under a general anaesthetic but can sometimes be performed under local anaesthetic.

In the liposuction process, the fat from the donor site is removed from its blood supply and must pick up a new blood supply in the area to which it has been injected. The time it takes for this process to occur may mean that some of the injected fat does not pick up a new blood supply and will be reabsorbed by your body. Sometimes this fat can feel firm or lumpy before it is reabsorbed and your plastic surgery team will advise you regarding massage techniques which can help with this. As a consequence of some of the injected fat being reabsorbed, it may be necessary to repeat the surgery to achieve the best result.

Previous treatments such as radiotherapy and lifestyle factors such as smoking will affect the success of this procedure due to their influence on the blood supply in the tissues of the areas being treated. It is likely that it will be necessary to repeat the procedure in these cases to achieve the desired outcome.

Are there any side-effects or complications?
Most patients do not experience any problems but you should be as fit as possible before surgery, not actively dieting and must also stop smoking.

- Swelling at the donor site-as with any liposuction, this can take a while to settle which is why wearing a compression garment is advisable. Bruising and skin discoloration can occur but this is usually temporary. Before surgery you should not be taking aspirin or anti-inflammatory medication.

- Sensation – if there is any sensation present in the area being treated, this can remain numb for several weeks after the procedure.
• Pain – although not an especially painful procedure, you may take your usual painkillers as required. (Do not exceed recommended dose).

• Weight gain and weight loss – once all the tissues have recovered, the fat cells that have been injected will respond to any changes in your weight after the procedure. If you gain weight, these cells will get bigger as a result of the increase in weight and the area of injected fat may be noticeably fuller. If you lose weight these cells will get smaller and some or all of the contour correction may be lost. This is why it is important therefore that your weight is stable and at a level that is normal for you at the time of your surgery.

**Post-operative recovery**

The surgery is carried out in the operating theatre and is usually a day-case or occasionally involves an overnight stay. You should rest for 24 hours after your surgery and then increase your activity levels slowly. Normal, non-strenuous activity can be resumed after two to three days.

It may be best for you not to wear a bra at all, or, to wear a soft, seamless bra for four to six weeks following your surgery. If you do want to wear a bra, ensure it does not put pressure on the lipomodelled area as this may prevent the injected fat from picking up a new blood supply and settling in a natural position.

You will have a few small stitches to close the incisions which may have to be removed in the dressing clinic at 7 to 10 days if they are not dissolvable. It is advisable to wear a snug girdle or long-legged knickers/cycle shorts over the donor area for a few weeks. This will help with the swelling and bruising and also with the contouring of the donor area.

We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

**Other formats:**

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team:

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.