



SCALPEL NEWS

The Latest in Lipo

By Joan Kron

Liposuction is the most popular plastic surgery among women, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Not coincidentally, every couple of years a new technique promises to be safer and more effective. The newest innovation is the vaser, a pulsed ultrasound probe that liquefies fat before it's suctioned out through a tube known as a cannula. Having used it at Dallas's University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, plastic surgeons Jeffrey Kenkel and Rod Rohrich say that it refines ultrasonic liposuction, which offers smoother contouring than suction alone. Even so says Miami plastic surgeon Tracy Baker, the best technique for a patient depends, in part, on the area and amount of fat to be extracted, and the outcome reflects not just the instrument, but also the vision, skill and experience of the physician.

Fat-Removal Methods

PROCEDURE	HOW IT WORKS	PROS	CONS
<p>SAL (Suctioned-Assisted Lipoplasty), introduced in the United States in the early 1980s.</p>	<p>Fat is removed through skin incisions with a hollow tube connected to a suction device.</p>	<p>Has the longest track record; involves smaller incisions than ultrasonic liposuction does, minimizing the chances of visible scars.</p>	<p>May be more traumatic than other methods (it tears the fat without liquefying it). Like all such surgeries it involves risks, most commonly uneven contours.</p>
<p>UAL (Ultrasound-Assisted Lipoplasty), common in this country since 1996.</p>	<p>Pre-suctioning, fat is liquified (for easier more even removal) via continuous sound waves emitted from a cannula inserted under the skin.</p>	<p>Considered to be especially good for smooth contouring of the tissue in hips and buttocks.</p>	<p>In early days, was associated with skin burns (now most doctors cover the cannula with a protective sleeve). Can involve longer recovery than SAL</p>
<p>PAL (Power-Assisted Lipoplasty), introduced two years ago.</p>	<p>Fat is vacuumed by a vibrating cannula inserted through multiple incisions.</p>	<p>The vibrating cannula moves more easily through fat and tissue, shortening operating time (though that depends on the amount of fat).</p>	<p>In inexperienced hands, it may produce lumpy results—true of all liposuction, but more so with PAL because of its speed, power, and newness.</p>
<p>VAL (Vaser-Assisted Lipoplasty), practiced for less than one year.</p>	<p>A solid cannula emits intermittent (rather than constant) sound waves to liquefy fat, which is then suctioned through a hollow cannula.</p>	<p>Associated with smoother contouring than SAL, and shorter periods of pain, numbness, and recovery than nonpulsed UAL.</p>	<p>Since it's a new technology, doctors are less experienced in its use.</p>