

# From Beer Belly to Six Pack?

Could SmartLipo be the answer to every man's dream, and transform that protruding pouch into a salacious six pack, preferably overnight? We couldn't wait to hear what dermatologist Dr. Nantapat from APEX Profound Beauty had to say on the subject.

We've all been there, especially after the recent sinful holidays: standing in front of a full-length mirror, critically assessing one's body and thinking wistfully 'if only I could get rid of those love handles, that turkey neck, or beer belly... life would be perfect!' Especially if this could be achieved without some near-starvation carrot and cucumber diet or punishing work-outs.

Sorry guys, the bad news is that no such magical cure has been discovered as yet. In the meantime, we'll have to 'make do' with the latest discovery in the field of cosmetic science - Laserlipolysis, or SmartLipo. The best person to fill us in (pun not intended) is cosmetic dermatologist Dr. Nantapat Supapannachart, Thailand's leading practitioner for Botox, Liposuction and Thermage (skin laser tightening), and founder of the APEX Profound Beauty clinics.

"The ideal candidate for SmartLipo is someone who's not overweight, but who suffers from excess fat either on their stomach, waist, neck, underarms or thighs, which they can't get rid of via exercise or diet," Dr. Nantapat explains. "With this technique, we can reshape the problem area."

SmartLipo is the newest kid on the liposuction block and it employs laser technology to 'demolish' the fat. To get down to the 'gory' details (which you should be used to by now if you've been watching medical TV programs or shows like Xtreme Makeover, Nip/Tuck or The Swan), the procedure entails the insertion of small flexible tubes (cannulae) with a numbing solution into the skin, followed by the application of a laser, also through the cannulae. The laser breaks down the membranes of the fat cells, reducing them to liquid. The liquefied fat is either naturally eliminated by the body or sucked out, depending on the size of the area to be treated.

The procedure is performed under local anesthesia. No stitches are required and there are no scars as the cannulae are as small as needles. A treatment takes, on average, one hour, depending on the amount of fat to be removed, allowing patients to undergo this procedure in the doctor's clinic and even return to work after a lunchtime treatment. Some patients will be able to see immediate results, while most others, again on average, will see the final results - which are long-term - in about two to three months.

"My patients love it," says Dr. Nantapat, assuring me that this minimally invasive procedure is less painful than traditional liposuction, where larger cannulae are used. Complications are also rare. There is also significantly less bleeding, bruising and swelling, resulting in less downtime. Moreover, the laser coagulates the blood vessels immediately, thus reducing the trauma beneath the skin.

Another bonus of using laser is the tightening effect it has on the skin. The laser generates heat, causing microscopic changes and collagen contraction, with subsequent collagen remodeling over the course of months. As a result, SmartLipo might be the ideal solution for women looking to get rid of unsightly 'bat wings'. Cellulite is another problem many women face. SmartLipo may not be able to eliminate this completely, but an improvement in skin texture is often noticeable.

Does this mean only female patients are clamoring for SmartLipo then? Quite the contrary: Dr. Nantapat estimates nearly half of her clients are male, a much higher ratio compared to other cosmetic procedures. While for women the most common problem areas

are underarms, stomach and lateral thighs, for men it's love handles, the stomach and neck.

At APEX Profound Beauty, patients have plenty of choices of treatments designed to contour and shape the body. Tumescent liposuction, the surgical suctioning of fat, and coincidentally the most commonly performed cosmetic procedure in the United States, is the most effective treatment around. But this may be too harsh if only a small area of fat is to be removed. Less drastic measures are Carboxy and Mesotherapy, both involving injections which target fat cells. Each treatment has its own merit, and each patient can be advised during private consultations which would be most suitable for him.

"There are so many different techniques nowadays. And every time you blink, there's a new and improved machine out there," Dr. Nantapat enthuses. But she cautions that no treatment or machine can undo the damaging effect of an unhealthy lifestyle. Despite the fact that word about SmartLipo seems to be spreading like wildfire, the doctor frequently turns down patients.

"I told one huge man that he had to loose weight first and start exercising," she says. "We advised him to enter our weight reduction program and once he got his weight down, then we could perform liposuction."

But sometimes, no matter how much you watch what you eat or how tough an exercise regimen you follow, there may be that unsightly bit of flab that refuses to budge. That's when cosmetic procedures like SmartLipo are an ideal solution. The doctor confides in us that one of her recent patients was a well-known personal trainer who works out every day. "You can imagine that if he can't get rid of excess fat, then nobody can!"

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