

Fibrosis after liposuction: what it is and how we treat it

A few weeks out from lipo, you run your hand over the area and... lumps. Ridges. A hard patch that wasn't there before.

It's one of the most common worries we hear.

The good news? Fibrosis can often be softened, and it's much easier to prevent than to fix.

01

What fibrosis actually is

After liposuction, the treated area fills with fluid, and that fluid is rich in proteins. When the lymphatic system can't clear it fast enough, it settles and firms up, much like Jell-O setting. If it stays, the body lays collagen fibres through it, and you feel firm, lumpy or ropey tissue under the skin.

Fibrosis is a change in the connective tissue itself, which is why simply draining isn't always enough once it's formed.

Some lumpiness in the first few weeks is normal. Swelling itself feels uneven. Fibrosis is firmness that sticks around, or gets harder, as the weeks go on.

02

Is it fibrosis, or something else?

Firm or nodular areas after plastic surgery can also signal fat necrosis or a seroma, which need your surgeon. Here's how they typically differ:

WHAT YOU FEEL	LIKELY	WHAT TO DO
Uneven, soft-firm lumps in weeks 1-4	Normal early swelling	Lymphatic drainage, compression, patience
Firm, fixed, ropey areas that persist or harden after 4-6 weeks	Fibrosis	Lymphatic drainage plus fibrosis techniques
Soft, squishy pocket that moves or sloshes	Seroma	See your surgeon
Hard, round, sometimes tender lump	Possible fat necrosis	See your surgeon
Hot, red, increasingly painful lump, fever	Possible infection	See your surgeon today

03

Prevention starts early

The best fibrosis treatment is not letting fluid sit.

- Gentle lymphatic drainage from the first week or two after surgery
- Consistent compression and foam, exactly as your surgeon prescribes
- Walking and deep breathing, every day
- Skipping heat and aggressive deep massage in the early weeks. Experts note these can bring more fluid into the tissue and make it harder to clear.

04

How we treat established fibrosis

Once fibrosis has formed, we combine methods from the leaders in this field:

- Manual lymphatic drainage to clear the fluid around the firm area, the same approach CLTs use for fibrosis in lymphedema
- Fibrosis and connective tissue techniques: specific techniques that soften the collagen fibres before the lymphatic strokes
- A layered approach, working from the surface down. We start at the skin and outer fascia and only move deeper as each layer releases, so nothing is forced
- Scar release around healed incision ports, lifting the scar off the tissue it's stuck to
- Compression and home care so the gains hold between sessions

05

How much pressure?

More than lymphatic drainage, but never forceful.

At most, it should feel like the "hurts so good" of a satisfying workout. If you flinch, grit your teeth or hold your breath, it's too much. Pain switches on your stress response, and that works against healing.

06

Your recovery timeline

WHEN	WHAT'S TYPICAL	HOW WE SUPPORT YOU
Weeks 1-3	Lumpy, swollen, tender	Prevention: MLD and compression
Weeks 4-8	Firm areas show up, some softening	Assessment. Start fibrosis techniques if needed.
Months 2-4	Established fibrosis softens gradually	Weekly sessions, home scar work
6+ months	Older, denser fibrosis	Longer series. It's never too late to start.

07

What we will never do

- Push fluid out through incisions or re-open ports
- Use aggressive tools, cavitation or painful "breaking up" on fresh tissue
- Work over a lump that might be infection, seroma or fat necrosis without your surgeon's input

08

At home between sessions

- ☐ Wear compression as prescribed
- ☐ Gentle self-drainage as we show you, not hard rubbing
- ☐ Once healed, short scar sessions: a minute or two, a couple of times a day, is often enough
- ☐ Walk, breathe, hydrate
- ☐ Avoid heat on the area in the early weeks

How long does it take?

It depends on how long the fibrosis has been there and how firm it is. Many clients feel a difference within a few sessions. Older, denser fibrosis can take a longer series, often weekly over a couple of months. We'll reassess regularly and be honest about progress.

10 · QUESTIONS

Your questions, answered

Is it normal to have lumps after liposuction?

Some lumpiness in the first few weeks is normal. Firmness that persists or hardens after about 4–6 weeks may be fibrosis.

Can fibrosis after lipo be fixed without surgery?

Often yes. Lymphatic drainage, fibrosis techniques and compression can soften many cases. Severe or long-standing fibrosis may also need your surgeon's input.

Should I massage hard lumps myself after lipo?

Gentle self-drainage can help, but aggressive rubbing or heat can make swelling worse. We'll show you what's safe for your stage of healing.

How is fibrosis different from a seroma?

Fibrosis feels firm and fixed. A seroma is a pocket of fluid that feels soft, squishy or like it moves. Seromas need your surgeon.

Is fibrosis treatment painful?

It should feel like firm, satisfying work, never pain that makes you flinch.

My lipo was over a year ago. Is it too late?

No. Older fibrosis usually takes longer, but it can often still be softened.

WHY RENU

Not all "lymphatic massage" is the same.

After surgery, you're trusting someone with healing tissue. Here's what you get at Renu.

Led by a Certified Lymphedema Therapist with 10 years' experience. Our post-op and lymphedema program is led by Meeghan Mackenzie, RMT since 2005 and a Certified Lymphedema Therapist since 2016. Meeghan earned her CLT through the Academy of Lymphatic Studies' 135-hour Complete Lymphedema Certification, which covers Manual Lymph Drainage and Complete Decongestive Therapy, the same standard used to treat lymphedema after cancer. She is one of roughly 350 CLTs in Canada.

Trained in the world's leading lymphatic methods. Beyond her CLT, Meeghan has trained in:

- Vodder Manual Lymph Drainage, the original method developed by Dr. Emil Vodder and the foundation of lymphatic therapy worldwide
- Földi, the German school behind Complete Decongestive Therapy, named for the Földi Clinic in the Black Forest, one of Europe's leading lymphology centres
- Chikly Lymph Drainage Therapy, which teaches therapists to feel the rhythm, direction and depth of lymph flow, map pathways by hand, and work with scar tissue and fibrosis

That combination lets us choose the right approach for your body and your surgery, not a one-size-fits-all routine.

Over 20 years of hands-on experience, with a clinical focus on oncology, lymphedema and surgical recovery.

Registered Massage Therapy receipts for your extended health plan.

Honest care. We tell you what lymphatic work can do, what it can't, and when you need your surgeon instead.

What to look for in any post-op therapist:

- A regulated health licence (in Alberta, an RMT, physiotherapist, OT or nurse)
- Formal lymphatic or lymphedema certification, not a weekend course
- Light, comfortable technique. If it hurts, it isn't lymphatic drainage
- No pushing fluid out of incisions
- Clear, published pricing, and willingness to work with your surgeon

FOR YOU TO KEEP

My recovery notes

Bring this page to your sessions. It helps us plan your care around your surgeon's instructions.

PROCEDURE

SURGERY DATE

SURGEON AND CLINIC PHONE

CLEARED FOR LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE ON

COMPRESSION INSTRUCTIONS

SESSION DATE	HOW I'M FEELING · NOTES



GIVE FRESH LIFE OR STRENGTH TO.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Feeling lumps or hard spots after lipo?

Send us a message or call 403-270-2111. Tell us when you had surgery and what you're feeling, and we'll help you figure out the next step. Book at renu.janeapp.com.

BOOK ONLINE

renu.janeapp.com

CALL

403-270-2111

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This guide is general education to support your recovery. It doesn't replace the advice of your surgeon or medical team. Always follow your surgeon's instructions, and seek medical care for any of the warning signs listed in this guide.

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