

My upper arms are so flabby I feel like I'm growing wings. I would love to wear vest tops and shift dresses again...

Anita Hazari: Unfortunately, as we age, the skin of our upper arms begins to sag and hangs from the lower side of the arm when the arm is extended. This condition can also occur after substantial weight loss, even in young people. Arm reduction (brachioplasty) can remove the excess skin and underlying fatty tissue. But be aware that it will leave a scar in the armpit, extending in most cases on the inner part of your arm. So if your main motivation is to wear sleeveless outfits again, you may be disappointed. New techniques have evolved using a combination of liposuction with a shorter scar arm lift, but these are generally more suitable for people with smaller amounts of loose skin and fatty tissue to be removed, and whose skin has retained some elasticity. The surgeon should discuss whether you would be a suitable candidate for this approach. If you have significant sun damage, extensive stretch marks or very loose skin, you would not make a good candidate for short scar surgery.

I know what liposuction is, but what about liposculpture? The name itself sounds so much more attractive.

Charles Nduka: Liposculpture is a surgical procedure in which fat cells are removed from the body. It uses finer instruments than liposuction to target and define very specific areas of the body. Liposculpture can be used on stubborn 'pockets' of fat. It is available to both men and women and is normally done under local anaesthetic and sedation as a day procedure. There are some new techniques for fat removal using ultrasound and laser systems (laserlipolysis). These procedures are not generally used to remove large areas of fat, but to target specific areas of fat more precisely.

Paul Banwell: In addition to performing liposculpture in combination with a tummy-tuck, problem areas including love-handles and inner- and outer-thighs can be treated with liposculpture alone. It is essential to bear in mind that liposculpture is not a method of losing weight and is not a substitute for diet and exercise.

Is abdomen liposuction effective? I'm worried the fat will just return.

Paul Banwell: In the right man or woman, liposuction is highly effective in shaping the abdominal area. The lower abdomen especially seems to be more resistant to exercise and diet. Additionally, cesarean births and pregnancy can have significant effects on the lower abdomen. Most of the abdominal fat is directly beneath the skin, and is easily removed through liposuction. As long as you maintain a healthy lifestyle and exercise, the results should be long-lasting.

Two pregnancies and childbirths have caused a lot of damage to my body. Although I exercise regularly and have a healthy diet it doesn't seem to be enough to get my silhouette and firmness back. My youngest child is 13 months old. Is it too early to have surgery?

Paul Banwell: You are not alone: a recent study by *Mother & Baby* magazine found that 86 per cent of women said that they felt less attractive post-pregnancy, while a similar number were unhappy with their weight and shocked by the changes in their body afterwards. My policy is not to operate on a mother until her last child is at least 12 months old. Also, would you consider having more children? I usually advise patients to complete all their pregnancies before commencing surgery. You will still need to commit to a healthy lifestyle, involving a sensible diet and exercise regime, in order to maximise and maintain the results. Post-pregnancy cosmetic surgery can have a very positive effect. As long as the expectations of outcomes are realistic, I find the overall satisfaction rate in this group of patients is very high.

I am a 36 year-old woman with a healthy lifestyle and I am happy with my weight. But despite my best efforts, my tummy is still protruding and I seem to have a lot of excess skin. Is a tummy tuck the answer?

David Floyd: It may well be. Abdominoplasty, otherwise known as 'tummy tuck', is used to restore a woman's tummy to its original shape and position. It is one of the most rewarding and popular procedures available today. It is commonly performed in cases where abdominal skin and muscles have been significantly stretched, such as women who have recently given birth or a person who has gained and then lost a large amount of weight. It can also correct Caesarean scars and reduce the effects of stretch marks. The procedure is designed to tighten laxity of the abdominal wall, which is the result of stretching, by removing excess fat and loose skin, repair any underlying damage to the abdominal muscles and reposition the umbilicus.

I have a lot of moles - more, it seems, as I get older. There is a large brown mole on my waist that often rubs with my clothing. Should I do anything about it?

Roy Ng: Moles can vary in size, shape and colour. Some moles are flat, while others have a raised appearance. The majority of moles are usually harmless, however if you notice a change in colour or shape, or if the mole begins to irritate, then you should have it checked by a doctor as these symptoms could be the signs of something more serious. Highly visible moles on the body or face, moles that restrict movement, or which are overly large, can cause embarrassment, pain and distress. Fortunately mole removal surgery is a fast, straightforward and commonly performed procedure, usually carried out as a day case. There are many mole removal treatments available (laser removal, excision or shaving using a scalpel...) and it's important to find the correct treatment for your individual mole so you should have a full consultation with a qualified surgeon before considering any procedure.

