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End justifies the means...

You've done the best you can with training and diet. Is going under the knife the way to your dream derriere?

BY MICHELLE VILLET



Blame it on J.Lo. Her shapely backside, once rumored to be insured for millions of dollars, has become one of the most desirable body parts in the world. "Our aesthetic is moving south," says Dr. Anthony Griffin, the Beverly Hills plastic surgeon who appears on ABC's *Extreme Makeover*. "It's moving from the breasts to the tummy and now to the buttocks."

Not everyone's blessed with a "bootylicious" bottom, but it can be shaped or enlarged by diet, exercise or weight training. But if you've shed major pounds, you could be left with loose, droopy skin on the butt and elsewhere on your body. According to the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, the number of buttock lifts performed on women has increased by 267 percent since the year 2000. "I'm just amazed about the increase," says Chicago plastic surgeon Dr. Gregory Wiener, who performs more than 70 buttock-contouring procedures annually.

We investigated the three types of bun-enhancing surgeries. Here's the bottom line on what's involved and which procedures could be right for you.

FAT TRANSFER

What it is?

Griffin trademarked the term "Brazilian Butt Lift" for this procedure, which involves not a lift at all, but the transfer of excess fat from the waist, lower back and hips into the buttocks.

It's for you if...

You have a naturally flat rear end and some excess fat around your midsection.

How it's done

"There are no incisions," says Griffin. Instead, fat is removed by liposuction from the abdomen, lower back and hips, then injected through a specialized needle into the buttocks. The amount of fat required depends on the degree of roundness and protrusion you're after. This outpatient procedure is usually performed under general anesthesia and takes two to four hours.

Recovery time

After the surgery, you'll need to wear a special compression garment, similar to a girdle, for several days to minimize swelling and maintain the shape of the buttocks. You'll be able to sit down, but may find it more comfortable to lie on your side or

stomach. A follow-up visit is required within 24 to 48 hours to change the dressings on the injection sites. After this time, you can shower as usual and only need to wear the compression garment at night, for about two weeks. Griffin prescribes pain medication for the first day or two as well as muscle relaxants. "We've found people have muscle soreness as if they've worked out." Within 10 to 14 days, you can expect to get back to work. Normal physical activities and an exercise regime can be resumed in about six weeks.

Results

Although results are permanent, depending on where the fat is injected, anywhere from 10 to 40 percent of it may be absorbed back into the body. Some people opt to undergo second, even third surgeries to achieve further augmentation.

Risks

"The biggest thing that you can risk is an infection," says Griffin. Other possible complications include changes in skin sensation, dimpling, lumpiness and discoloration.

Average Cost

\$4,000.00

BUTTOCK IMPLANT

What it is?

Silicone implants are surgically inserted into the buttock region. Slightly firmer than breast implants, they come in different shapes and sizes, including round, oval and teardrop. Which one you choose depends on your body type and the degree of roundness and projection you're after, says Wiener.

It's for you if...

You're trim and lack the excess fat needed for the fat transfer procedure. Implants are also ideal for those seeking dramatic results, says Wiener. "It's going to give you more overall volume than a fat injection."

How it's done

Implants are inserted through incisions made where the cheeks meet the back of the thighs or, more commonly, between the vertical buttock crease, where scars are not noticeable. The implants are then placed beneath the gluteus maximus muscle. After performing the procedure on each buttock, the doctor ensures they are symmetrical before stitching up the incisions. The outpatient surgery is usually performed under general anesthesia and takes about two hours.

Recovery time

After the surgery, a small tubular plastic drain is inserted at the incision site in order to expel fluid. "With any procedure, your

body produces a certain amount of fluid and we don't want any collecting around the implant," says Wiener. The drain is removed after a few days. As with the fat transfer, you'll need to wear a compression garment for the first 48 hours, and then at night only for the next two weeks. Because the implants are stretching tissues, expect to experience some pain, stiffness and swelling in the first few days; again, you'll be able to sit down, but resting on your side or stomach will be more comfortable. Your surgeon may prescribe pain medication, an anti-inflammatory and antibiotics to prevent infection. Stitches are removed in about 10 days, at which time you can expect to return to work. You'll be able to partake in normal physical activities, including exercise, in six to eight weeks.

Results

Permanent. "These implants are not meant to be changed every few years," says Wiener. "It's for life."

Risks

Patients whose implants are inserted between the buttocks are at greater risk for infection because of the proximity of the incisions to the anus. In rare cases, implants may shift over time, rupture or even break.

Average Cost

\$5,000.00

10 Questions You Must Ask Your Surgeon

- 1 Are you certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS)?**
When a doctor claims to be "board certified," ask by which board. Only the ABPS is recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties to certify doctors in plastic surgery (www.abms.org).
- 2 What experience do you have in performing this type of surgery?**
"They should do at least 20 to 30 procedures a year to have a good amount of experience in the area," says Wiener.
- 3 What procedure do you recommend for me and why?**
Discuss with your doctor the different types of surgeries available to you, and the technique he or she feels is most appropriate to help you reach your cosmetic goal.
- 4 What is the expected recovery for this procedure?**
Always discuss postoperative care and any restrictions on bathing and activity levels. Find out when you will be able to return to work and your exercise regime.
- 5 What are the possible risks and what percentage of patients have them?**
Make sure you have a clear view of the potential complications associated with the surgery.
- 6 Can you show me before and after photographs of your work?**
Familiarize yourself with the surgeon's aesthetic preferences and make sure they match your requirements.
- 7 Can I talk to patients who have had the same procedure?**
Your doctor should have a list of references available. "Talk to patients who had it done and who are more than willing to say, 'I'm happy, I've been out two years, three years or 10 years,'" says Griffin.
- 8 How much does the surgery cost?**
Be aware of any additional fees such as those for a hospital stay and anesthesia. While it is tempting to bargain shop, "don't shop price," cautions Griffin. "You will pay for what you get."
- 9 What is your policy on surgical revisions?**
Some cases may require second or third surgeries to achieve the desired result. Find out what's involved and whether you'll be responsible for these costs.
- 10 Have you ever had your malpractice insurance coverage denied, revoked or suspended?**
If the answer is yes, it goes without saying that you should shop elsewhere.

BUTTOCK LIFT

What it is?

Excess skin is removed at the belt line in order to lift up the entire buttock region. In general, this procedure is used to add tone and tautness to the backside, rather than volume.

It's for you if...

You have excess or sagging skin due to extreme weight loss or aging. "This is for people who are very loose," says Beverly Hills plastic surgeon Dr. Adrien Aiache.

How it's done

An incision is made around the lower back or upper buttock region. A large amount of skin is removed in order to raise the buttocks and improve their shape, says Aiache. If more volume is desired, some surgeons can tuck the excess skin back underneath the tissues to create fullness. This is an outpatient procedure usually performed under general anesthesia, and can take anywhere from two to four hours.

Recovery time

As with the other two surgeries, you'll have to wear a compression garment initially, and will experience a degree of pain, swelling and bruising. Recovery time is similar to that experienced with the other surgeries, says Wiener, which

means that sitting may be uncomfortable for the first several days, but you should be able to return to work in about two weeks. Exercise and normal activity can be resumed after six to eight weeks.

Results

Permanent. However, "it does involve a scar," says Wiener. "It goes right around the panty line."

Risks

Like the other surgeries, a buttock lift carries the risk of infection. Some people also experience excessive swelling, bleeding, changes in skin sensation and numbness.

Average Cost

\$4,000.00

"IMPLANTS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE CHANGED EVERY FEW YEARS. IT'S FOR LIFE."