

FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL
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LIPOSUCTION HELPS SOME AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AVOID UNSIGHTLY BREAST REDUCTION SCARS, ASPS STUDY FINDS

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Ill. – Some African American women may choose not to have breast reduction surgery because of the scars darker skinned patients are prone to develop. Instead, these women live with the daily pain and physical restraint caused by overly large breasts. According to a study in February's *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*®, the official medical journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), liposuction breast reduction may offer African American women a scarless alternative to traditional breast reduction.

“African American women, like all women, want relief from the physical ailments associated with overly large breasts; the difference being that darker skin is prone to more adverse scarring,” said Sherwood Baxt, MD, ASPS Member Surgeon and study author. “Through this less invasive procedure, patients’ experienced high satisfaction, a decrease or elimination of physical symptoms, and an increase self-esteem and quality-of-life. However, liposuction reduction is not appropriate for women whose primary concern is to lift overly large, sagging breasts.”

The study examined 17 African American women whose primary complaint was weight-related, i.e., to relieve physical symptoms associated with overly large breasts – as opposed to lifting the breast. All 17 women underwent liposuction breast reduction. Prior to the procedure, all patients attempted non-surgical therapies such as physical therapy, strengthening exercises, and chiropractic care to relieve their symptoms.

Patients were studied up to six months after the procedure and all experienced alleviation or significant relief in neck, back and shoulder pain and postural imbalances. Patients’ quality-of-life significantly improved, as did their self-esteem, overall health and well-being.

A drawback of liposuction breast reduction is that it does not significantly lift sagging breasts, unlike traditional breast reduction. In addition, liposuction breast reduction is only effective at removing fat, and not gland tissue. The procedure is ineffective for patients whose breasts are primarily glandular. In some cases, patients’ breasts cannot be reduced as much as traditional breast reduction surgery.

“Be aware this procedure is a compromise,” said Walter Erhardt, MD, ASPS Public Education Committee Chair. “Traditional breast reduction is still the gold standard – offering patients the trifecta of volume reduction, relief of physical symptoms, and lift. Women should discuss options and expectations thoroughly with their plastic surgeon. Those considering the procedure should know that while physical ailments and scarring can be improved, there are limitations to the amount of reduction and no lift will occur.”

Nearly 769,000 African Americans had cosmetic plastic surgery in 2005, according to ASPS statistics. African Americans made up eight percent of the more than 10.2 million cosmetic procedures performed in 2005. The most commonly requested surgical procedures for African Americans were nose reshaping, breast reduction and liposuction.

For referrals to ASPS Member Surgeons certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, call 888-4-PLASTIC (475-2784) or visit www.plasticsurgery.org where you can also learn more about cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery.

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) is the largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons in the world. With more than 6,000 members, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 90 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

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Editor's Note: February is Black History Month.