

a balancing act

Dr John Flynn from Queensland discusses combination surgeries that help to correct disproportionate body shapes. Tara Casey reports.

Many people have dieted, exercised and are at their optimum healthy weight and yet still feel self-conscious in a swimsuit because some fat simply refuses to budge, especially on their hips and lower tummy. Similarly, many other women are unhappy with their smaller breasts compared with their curvy hips.

'A lot of women are concerned about their disproportionate body shape – lack of projection on top or too much projection at the bottom,' says Dr John Flynn from Queensland.

According to Dr Flynn, changing body shape is a matter of balance. 'Breast augmentation can firm up the top end, while liposuction can trim down the bottom half of the body so the patient feels more comfortable with her body.'

In his initial consultation with each patient, Dr Flynn tries to ensure a balance between what is possible, appropriate and aesthetically pleasing and the patient's own desires. This means first a careful assessment of her body shape – including height, build and proportions. Length of bones, distribution of body fat and skin elasticity are also all taken into consideration.

Dr Flynn says he often finds himself asking, 'Do you realise?'. For example, to a woman with a short torso: 'Do you realise that a much bigger breast implant might make you look shorter?' Or to a patient contemplating liposuction: 'Do you realise if I take too much off the bulge on the inner side of your thighs then the outer side won't look right?'

Trying on a crop top with different-sized implants can give the patient an idea of how her breasts might look when enhanced. Dr Flynn can then advise her on how a boosted cup size would harmonise with her hips, height and overall silhouette.

'Determining the extent of liposuction (removal via a cannula of stubborn fat deposits that don't normally respond to diet and exercise) around the hip, bottom and thighs to achieve the right balance takes a significant deal of skill and experience,' he says.

Dr Flynn measures the patient's hip and thigh circumference, and seeks practical feedback from them. He asks her to show where her jeans are too tight or why she can't wear a particular item of clothing. 'This helps me decide the best treatment option to achieve the best results possible for each patient.'

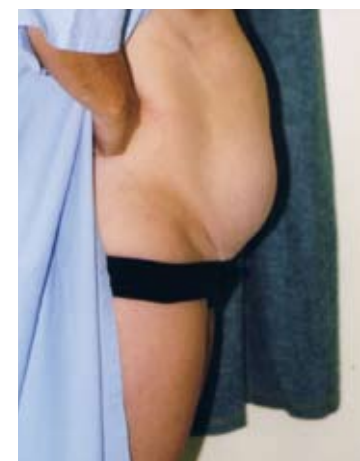
Balance is also important when determining how much fat to remove. 'I remove enough to give a nicer shape and contour. Too much may lead to an undesirable hollow effect or loose skin, which can then lead to an additional cosmetic problem,' he says.

While liposuction on the lower body tends to concentrate on the bottom, hips and thighs, Dr Flynn also performs liposculpture using very fine cannulae to access knees, calves and ankles. 'Calves and ankles are more challenging, and involves making a straight calf more shapely or a chunkier calf finer.'

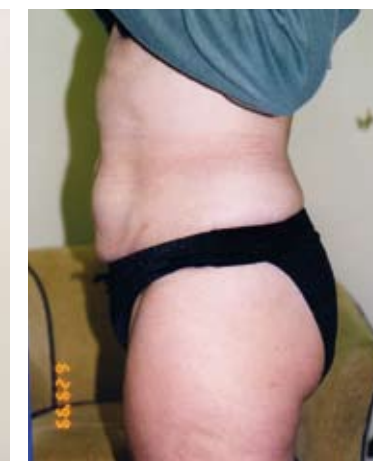
Dr Flynn says it is vital that patients have realistic expectations of body reshaping. 'This means that improvement, not perfection, is the goal. Fatty bulges should be localised to a few areas and the individual should be near their ideal body weight. Liposuction will not replace good eating and exercise habits or counter obesity.'

Dr Flynn points out that there is no set formula for balancing body shape using cosmetic surgery techniques. 'It's not like the tide tables or engineering formulas. It comes with experience and an innate eye, and is different for each individual patient.'

The patient also needs to think about balance in the way she perceives herself. 'It's important for her to balance the "me" she sees in the mirror and her feelings about her appearance with the total sum of her life,' he adds.



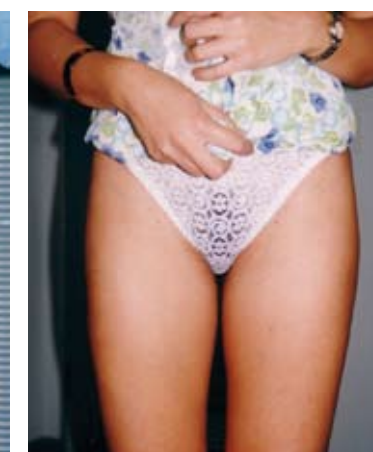
BEFORE (right side of patient)



AFTER liposuction to shape the abdomen by Dr Flynn (left side of patient)



BEFORE



AFTER liposuction to shape the legs by Dr Flynn



BEFORE



AFTER breast augmentation by Dr Flynn

Balance also comes into play with the way the doctor allocates their time. 'It's important to maintain a balance of pre-operative consultation and post-operative care with the operation itself,' he says.

Dr Flynn finds that many of his patients have such a psychological boost from the results of their cosmetic surgery it gives them the incentive to exercise even more than before to improve other parts of their physique.

When considering surgery to either augment or reduce certain parts of the body, patients need to be aware that all surgery involves some element of risk. The practitioner must have proper training and credentials, and extensive experience in the procedure. **acsm**