

# Dr. Ducic of the Center for Aesthetic Surgery *Explains* FAT GRAFTING and LIPOSUCTION

**F**at cells represent the body's main mechanism for long term energy storage. After early childhood, we do not make any new fat cells. Rather, the ones we have simply expand and contract depending on the amount of excessive energy the body is asking it to store. It is not surprising that some people are able to gain or lose weight easier than others. In part, it is a reflection on how active their metabolism is and on the number of fat cells available for storage.

Young children have full, healthy glowing skin, related in part to a generous amount of fat beneath the skin surface (subcutaneous). As one ages, there is thinning of the subcutaneous tissues of the face with a loss of volume. Due to this lack of fat to prop up the skin from beneath, the skin looks more drawn, wrinkled and unhealthy. While many different types of fillers are available such as Restylane, Juvederm and Sculptra, among others, fat has certain advantages not found in other injectables.

Fat cells may be harvested from relatively unwanted areas such as the lower abdomen or thighs and injected into areas of the face that are lacking in volume, such as the cheeks and occasionally the lips. The fat is harvested from a tiny incision inside the bellybutton for camouflage. Over time approximately 20 percent of patients will resorb all their fat. The remaining majority of patients will retain some or all of their injected fat over time. "Although I do not overcorrect the areas of injection, some swelling develops due to the surgery, which may be performed under sedation or general anesthesia," said Dr. Ducic. "Occasionally, it may be necessary to have more than one course of fat grafting to achieve optimal results."

Injected fat cells not only plump up the skin, help improve overlying wrinkles and restore some of the signs of aging, they also have other beneficial effects on



the skin. Research has suggested that fat cells, when injected into skin, may help improve the texture and quality of the skin. This may be related to growth factors or special stem cell-like fat cells that are naturally transferred during fat grafting.

Some patients have excessive fat stores, particularly in the neck. This results in loss of jaw-line contour, jowl formation and poor neckline. It is important to differentiate excessive fat in the neck from excessive fat associated with skin laxity. Simple liposuction of the neck and occasionally the lower one-third of the face is an excellent choice for people with good skin tone but excessive fat stores. If there is skin laxity, simple liposuction alone may make the situation worse. In these cases, a neck lift will be needed to tighten the loose overlying skin, giving the neck a nice natural appearance.

Both fat grafting to the face and liposuction of the neck represent minimally invasive surgical techniques that are associated with rapid recovery and minimal down time. For further information on this and other techniques, you may contact Dr. Ducic for a consultation in Colleyville (817-503-2442) or Fort Worth (817-920-0484) or visit his Web site at [www.drducic.com](http://www.drducic.com).

Dr. Ducic is a clinical associate professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas and medical director of the Center for Aesthetic Surgery in Colleyville. He is board certified in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery and the director of an AAFPRS accredited fellowship in facial plastic surgery. 



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