

# ASK DR. KATZEN



OH Magazine is pleased to present a series of articles featuring reader questions answered by expert plastic surgeon J. Timothy Katzen, MD, FACS. Do you have a question for Dr. Katzen? Send questions to [AskDrKatzen@ObesityHelp.com](mailto:AskDrKatzen@ObesityHelp.com) and your question may be answered in a future issue.

I have an appointment scheduled for a consultation with a plastic surgeon. What is the typical procedure for this type of appointment? Will we look at pictures? Will I need to disrobe? Will they do “before” pictures at the consultation or just prior to surgery? Will the surgeon be able to tell me about my possible results based on the consultation? I know all doctors are different but I’m looking for a typical scenario. —**Amanda**

## **Dear Amanda,**

Plastic surgeons perform their consultations differently. Usually, I mail my patients an extensive questionnaire to complete several weeks before their appointment. Then, I meet them in a private consultation in my office. My new consultations take approximately one hour. To determine if it is safe to perform surgery, I review their medical records and perform a thorough physical examination. To demonstrate expected results, I fold the patient’s skin in front of the mirror. I also outline the expected incision line. Then I open my extensive digital photograph archive and show the prospective new patient similar results in many other of my post-WLS patients of similar body build and weight loss. In addition, since I try to obtain insurance coverage for all procedures, I take pictures of all areas of concern. If patients desire, they are given a list of previous post-

WLS patients to call regarding any questions. They also meet my office manager, who will give them a cash quote in case their insurance denies coverage of the procedure.

Before your appointment, you should be sure your plastic surgeon is board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. To check, go to [www.PlasticSurgery.org](http://www.PlasticSurgery.org). In addition, you should be sure that your plastic surgeon has operated on a significant number of weight loss surgery patients. Since your healing and nutritional needs are different than those of a typical cosmetic surgery patient, you should seek a plastic surgery sub-specialist whose practice focuses on weight loss surgery patients. You should also check the integrity of the physician by consulting with other members using [ObesityHelp.com](http://ObesityHelp.com) chat rooms and messageboards.

I'm 23 years old. I know some excess skin is inevitable, but is there something I can do to prevent extensive amounts of plastic surgery after my weight is lost?

—Dana A.

Dear Dana,

The amount of skin recoil is dependent on your age, health, and amount of weight gain and subsequent weight loss. Typically, the quality of your skin will determine how much plastic surgery is needed. The fact that you are young means that a lot of your skin will bounce back or recoil. The best things that you can do to avoid plastic surgery after weight loss are staying fit and eating right. This means keep exercising, take your vitamins and iron, and eat a high protein diet.

As a pre-op “lightweight” patient with only about 85-95 pounds to lose, I want to know if there is a rule-of-thumb for how much weight loss requires plastic surgery.

—Jenny P.

Dear Jenny,

There is no golden rule as to how much weight loss requires plastic surgery—each patient is different. The answer is multifactorial and depends on your age, health, quality of skin, weight gain and weight loss, what areas bother you, and your own personal wishes. I have performed body lifts on a wide variety of patients from 21 years old to 64 years old, both men and women, with weight loss ranging from 80 to over 700 pounds. Everyone is different and has different areas of their bodies that concern them. Typically, I only perform plastic surgery on the areas that concern you most.

What do you recommend for someone who has lymphedema and massive amounts of skin on their legs? I've heard of having the skin removed, but isn't it possible to make the damage worse?

—Amy W.

Dear Amy,

Lymphedema is a significant medical problem. In addition, lower extremities are among the most difficult areas to treat surgically after massive weight loss. The combination of pre-existing lymphedema and excess skin is even more difficult to treat. Typically, I leave it up to the patient to decide whether the lymphedema and excess leg skin are bad enough to warrant sur-

gery. No plastic surgeon can foretell whether the lymphedema will disappear or get worse. However, with a longitudinal inner leg lift at least the skin and the fat will be gone. After a leg lift in a patient with pre-existing lymphedema, I routinely use my own line of high-tension compression garments and a qualified lymphedema massage therapist to minimize fluid collection.



Congratulations, you got rid of the fat! Now, get rid of the extra skin by letting **Dr. Katzen** help you to complete your weight loss journey. 100 percent of Dr. Katzen's practice is devoted to reconstructive plastic surgery after weight loss. Dr Katzen has a multi-disciplinary team to address the many issues concerning weight loss. We have an 80 percent rate of insurance approval. Please visit [www.BodyByKatzen.com](http://www.BodyByKatzen.com) and call 1-888-KATZEN-0 for a consultation.

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