

What is Fat Grafting?

Fat grafting is, quite simply, gentle liposuction of fat followed by injection in another area. This is a way to add subtle volume, soften and thicken tissue by adding small layers of fat. It is used to smooth hollowed areas of the body, or hide rippling from implants.

The donor site is the part of the body from where the extra fat is taken (commonly flanks, abdomen, thighs). This is taken through a small hole and suctioned with a thin hollow tube. The small fat “beads” are separated from fluid and oil. The purified fat is then injected into the treated areas as small ribbons. The new fat gets nutrients from direct contact with living tissue.

Who Can Have Fat Grafting?

Fat grafting is a natural filler, most useful to address contours and hollows. This is commonly used to:

- enhance aging facial volume loss or asymmetry
- fill hollowing after breast cancer reconstruction
- enhance or correct contour irregularities after body contouring surgery

The Surgery

Fat grafting takes 1-2 hours. Recovery time is 1 week. You will have some swelling and mild bruising at the injection site and donor site. You will need to wear a compressive garment at the site of fat harvest in the abdomen or legs for 1 month. After 3 months, the result is stable as most of the swelling has gone down.

Can a Breast be Augmented Using Fat Alone Instead of an Implant?

Fat can be injected to augment the breasts, but this takes multiple separate surgeries.

Injected fat in large amounts at once is not predictable and there will be a percentage that does not survive. A large “blob” of fat will not survive because the fat in the middle does not get the nutrients it needs to live. Because you cannot add too much fat at once, you may need multiple rounds of fat grafting, done at least 3-4 months apart.

The fat that survives grafting is permanent living tissue. The fat that does not survive may turn into oil cysts or internal

scar lumps. For breast cancer surveillance this may mean additional medical tests will be needed if lumps are found.

For breast augmentation with fat injection you must:

- Have a low risk of developing breast cancer
- Have enough fat from other parts of the body that may be harvested
- Be willing to undergo multiple surgeries
- Have knowledge of your alternatives and fat graft monitoring