

**Business news**

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## Lipodissolve company shuts down 17 offices

By JIM SALTER AP Business Writer  
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ST. LOUIS — A suburban St. Louis-based chain that provided fat-reduction procedures has shut down, leaving more than 500 employees out of work.

Fig., formerly known as Advanced LipoDissolve, posted a message on its Web site saying that "due to economic conditions beyond our control," the company ceased operation Dec. 7. Fig. closed the doors to 17 of its 18 clinics — one in Costa Mesa, Calif., is independently owned and remained open, the Web site said.

Calls on Tuesday to the corporate office in the St. Louis suburb, Maryland Heights, and to a company spokeswoman were not answered. Chief Executive Officer Rob Semaan did not have a listed phone number. About 130 of Fig.'s employees worked at the corporate office.

The Web site said, "The company is currently consulting with counsel and will likely seek legal relief under the bankruptcy code to ensure it preserves all options including the ability to reorganize and continue operations."

Patients currently undergoing treatment will be contacted by the company concerning treatment options and refund claims, the Web site said.

An official with Bessemer Venture Partners of Larchmont, N.Y., Fig.'s primary outside investor, did not return a phone call seeking comment.

Fig. had grown rapidly since opening its first clinic in suburban St. Louis two years ago. In addition to St. Louis and Costa Mesa, it operated clinics in Kansas City, Las Vegas, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, Scottsdale, Ariz., Louisville, Ky., and Columbus, Ohio.

Lipodissolve and similar body fat-melting treatments use two chemicals, phosphatidylcholine and sodium dioxycholate. Injections with the mix aren't a treatment for obesity but a way to dissolve deposits of fat in certain areas.

In September, a judge in Kansas blocked a state regulation that would have prevented most doctors from using the lipodissolve method. Kansas had been the first state to attempt to regulate the treatments, prompting a lawsuit by Fig.

The Kansas State Board of Healing Arts said at the time it was trying to protect consumers from potential health problems caused by an unproven drug. The federal Food and Drug Administration has not approved lipodissolve's key combination of chemicals.

The Kansas board said it had received at least half a dozen complaints about clinics giving such injections, including adverse reactions such as nodules, infections and nausea. But Fig. cited a 2006 study of 17,000 patients by two doctors who called the treatments' safety "excellent" and said no deaths were reported.

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On the Net:

<http://www.fig.com>

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