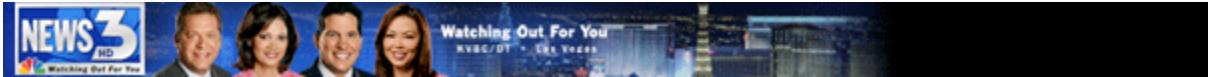


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Can you dissolve fat away?

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It's touted as an easy way to fix your body without surgery. Maybe you've heard of Lipo-Dissolve. Maybe you've even considered doing it. But does it work and, more importantly, is it safe?

Some people are raising serious questions about Lipo-Dissolve. It's a hot new thing in the world of cosmetic treatments. Britney Spears is even rumored to have undergone the procedure here in the valley. But is it as simple as it sounds?

"I've done walking, tapes to do. I've done everything and it didn't seem to go."

Alison Nolan paid \$6,000 for Lipo-Dissolve to flatten her tummy. But her dreams of a better body turned into a nightmare. "It looked black and blue when the lumps came up. At first it was all red then it bruised up. It was nasty."

Alison went to Advanced Lipo Dissolve, now called fig. You've probably heard their ads or seen them around town. Patients undergo a series of shots over several months. Patients are encouraged to exercise and make healthy food choices.

The company says most clients are happy with their results. "I've already lost two and a quarter inches off my abdomen and an inch on one thigh and a half an inch off the other," said one patient.

The patients are injected with a compound called PCDC. It's supposed to dissolve fat cells, which are then excreted through natural body processes.

"There are side effects that can happen with any injectable formula," says Dr. John Minoli. 85,000 treatments is a lot. I personally have been involved with thousands myself. Have yet to see, rare inflammatory responses, rare."

We sent a News 3 producer and photographer into fig. with hidden cameras. The staff did tell us about potential risks, but downplayed them. They encouraged our producer to start treatments right away.

fig. rep on hidden camera: After you do find out information about it, what would stop you from starting today and getting rid of those fat cells? I've personally done it and I'm pregnant right now, and I'm not worried at all about anything

But plastic surgeon Dr. Julio Garcia is worried. He won't even consider doing Lipo-Dissolve on his valley patients. "We don't know if this material gets absorbed into the body, what its potential effects are."

Dr. Garcia says there's no credible scientific evidence lipo dissolve is safe. "It's a large scale, unconsented experiment on people who don't know they're being experimented on."

fig. says all of its procedures are overseen by a medically trained staff member, often a nurse practitioner. But when Alison developed complications, she and her husband tell us the nurse didn't recognize what was wrong and they never saw a doctor. "There was no 'we'd like to see her and do follow up work,' no cause for patient care whatsoever, they dropped her like a rock," says Alison's husband, Chris.

A study fig. provided Healthline 3 of 17,000 patients found no serious complications or deaths from Lipo-Dissolve. But it also offered modest results. The study actually says the vast majority of patients reported a one centimeters thickness reduction.

It sounded good to Alison, until she ended up in the emergency room. She had developed abscesses, which are listed on the consent forms as a possible risk. Her abscesses had to be lanced and packed as open wounds, leading to a painful recovery.

Weeks later, Alison still couldn't bend over to tie her shoes. "This process is dangerous, women need to know what they're getting themselves into," Chris insists.

Beth: A lot of women have a nagging area and are thinking about doing this. Would you do this again?

Alison: No, no.

Beth: Why not?

Alison: 'cause it hurts too much.

fig. is not the only facility in the valley offering Lipo-Dissolve or similar procedures. The price varies from patient to patient, depending on what they have done. The drugs used in Lipo- Dissolve are not FDA approved for this use. And Dr. Garcia tells us the American Society of Plastic Surgeons does not support their use.



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