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Cosmetic Con: Some Clients Say Med Spas Misleading



Reporting
[Pam Zekman](#)

CHICAGO (CBS) — Medical spas have cropped up everywhere, a billion-dollar industry that offers non-surgical alternatives to cosmetic surgery.

But in response to complaints, the 2 Investigators found one chain that's misleading and harming clients, and as CBS 2 Investigator Pam Zekman reports, leaving some of them in the middle of a cosmetic con.

The seven NuU Medspas in the Chicago area aggressively promote Lipodissolve, a series of injections that supposedly will melt your fat away.

The ads talk about reduced inches with no knives, no tubes, and no pain -- a deceptive ad, patients say.

NuU does not tell clients that Lipodissolve is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

"There is no study out there that shows clearly whether it works and what specifically are the risks of it," said Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Dr. Michael Lee.

That's not a problem, said NuU district supervisor Laura Rowsey, formerly a modeling school sales manager.

"This is a soy-based mineral with amino acids," Rowsey said. "Bruising and swelling is like your worst case scenario with this treatment."

But doctors have seen a number of Lipodissolve complications.

Cynthia Sacramento, who went to the Lincoln Park spa, suffered painful scar tissue buildup around her injection site that will require surgery.

Dr. David Song of U. of C. Hospital said the entire injection area will have to be excised.

Sacramento said she's devastated.

Even proponents say Lipodissolve is for treating pockets of fat, not for bigger weight problems.

NuU in Lincoln Park signed another former client, who preferred to remain anonymous, up for \$2,400 in treatments on his belly.

"I think it's a big scam, a waste of money," he said. "The only thing that got thin on me was my wallet."

NuU sales people are pressured to meet sales goals and arrange for many clients to finance their treatments. The money is collected up front and NuU claims it's not refundable.

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"Our goal was to get \$15,000 a day," said former NuU spa manager Patti Feinstein.

Feinstein recalled how Rowsey scolded her for turning away a skin cancer patient saying, "You are not going to make quota if you don't sell," Feinstein said.

Records show her spa sold made more than \$200,000 a month.

But Feinstein said she worried about "sales people that were really scamming people."

Julia Bosman went to NuU in Schaumburg for Lipodissolve on her abdomen. But her salesperson tried to sign her up to treat several other areas.

"I proceeded to tell her that I wasn't interested in that," Bosman said.

Then she said the salesperson had her fill out a credit application for \$9,600 in case she changed her mind. She was approved, but, Bosman said, "I said well I want to think about it a little longer. She said, 'it's too late. I've already run the payment through with Care Credit.'"

And NuU collected it all even though she did not get all the treatments.

"It's a complete fraud," Bosman said. "It amounts to stealing."

The 2 Investigators told Rowsey that clients feel they were ripped off and tricked. She said that's not the company's intent.

"I'm not a high-pressure person like OK you need to sell thousands today right now or you're out," Rowsey said.

"For every one complaint you have, I can give you hundreds of people that love the center," she added.

Care Credit is terminating its arrangement with NuU because of disputes from clients like Bosman for whom it got refunds.

NuU officials say FDA approval is not needed for Lipodissolve treatments, but they are safe and effective and clients are warned about the potential risks.

Watch the CBS 2 News at 10 p.m. this Thursday, May 22, for more on what's being done to protect medical spa clients.

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Video

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