

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SURGERY

Both lipoedema and surgery can affect one's emotional wellbeing, and the combination of the two can be especially challenging. Many patients with Lipoedema suffer with anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

It is important to address the psychological impacts that Lipoedema may have had on your life, as well as those you may experience during the surgery and recovery.

You may experience feelings of anxiety, body image concerns, exhaustion, depression, disappointment with aspects of the surgical and recovery process, unmet expectations, uncertainty about the surgical outcomes, and the general emotional impact of undergoing a major surgical procedure.

Psychological impacts to consider, based on what other patients have told us:

- » You may experience feelings such as anxiety, body image concerns, exhaustion, depression, powerlessness, uncertainty about the surgical outcomes, lack of confidence in your choices
 - » The body you have known for your whole life will be changing during the surgery, have you considered if you will feel safe with these changes and in your changed body
 - » You or your family / carer may have an unexpected emotional reaction to your surgery, we have had some patients say they unexpectedly cried for weeks or months after surgery, even though they were happy with their surgery and their outcomes.
- » You may feel disappointment over the results of your surgery, which is not at all to discredit the surgical results, but your expectations may be different to the immediate reality. For instance:
 - you may have had a complication during the surgery that needs to be emotionally processed, especially if considering further surgeries
 - you may be disappointed if the amount of lipoedema fat removed is less than you expected
 - there may have been aspects of the surgical process that you weren't expecting or hadn't considered
 - there may be aspects of the recovery process that you weren't expecting or hadn't considered
 - the skin may be loose after surgery, short term or long term
 - you may not like the aesthetic look of your legs after surgery
 - another professional, such as an MLD therapist or healthcare provider that is not your surgical doctor, might comment about your surgical results or the aesthetic appeal of your post-surgical legs, which can leave you feeling uncertain, disheartened, or left managing dissonance (cognitive and psychological conflict), which can be very painful to reconcile.

It is important you consider the different types of emotional and psychological impacts surgery and recovery can have on you.

We strongly encourage you to prepare in advance by organising a mental health professional to support you before and after surgery.



Tips for accessing mental health support

Prepare in advance by organising a psychologist to support you before and after surgery.

Head to Health

The Australian Government provides a website dedicated to helping you find mental health support. Please visit www.headtohealth.gov.au to find out more.

Mental Health Care Plan

Speak to your GP to access a Mental Health Care Plan, which lets you claim up to 10 individual sessions with a mental health professional each calendar year. Please speak to your GP to find out more.

Mental Health Helplines

These services are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They have trained professionals on hand to support you.

- » Call Lifeline on 13 11 14
- » Text Lifeline on 0477 131 114
- » Chat online with Lifeline on www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/
- » Call Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636
- » Chat online with Beyond Blue via their website beyondblue.org.au

SANE for complex mental health support (not for acute mental health crisis)

SANE is for people with recurring, persistent or complex mental health issues and trauma, and for their families, friends and communities. A variety of support types and support levels is available including a 14 week program.

If you feel this is the level of mental health support you need, it is important you speak to your surgical doctor about this as your surgical journey may require additional support. Please call SANE Monday to Friday, 10am to 8pm, 1800 187 263 or visit www.sane.org

Tips for self-support, to complement and not replace the professional support listed above:

- » If you are seeking feedback or reassurance on your surgery, please contact your surgical Doctor as the first point of call by either calling or texting them directly with any concerns or contacting our office to arrange a telehealth appointment
- » Journal about your experience
- » Move your body as much as safely possible – even if it's just ankle flexes or arm raises
- » Observe your thoughts and try to be present in the moment. Seek support for any thoughts that are intrusive, repetitive or unhelpful
- » Meditate, there are a variety of free guided meditations available online
- » Consider a Body Scan Meditation
- » Breathwork, belly breathing or other supportive breathing techniques
- » Consider learning EFT Tapping
- » Reflect on times in the past when your body has surprised and impressed you with its ability to heal, get well after illness, repair, recover and renew. Are you able to anchor yourself in trust and respect for your body's innate healing wisdom?



Post-operative support from our team

- » You have your surgical doctor's mobile number, please call or text directly with any concerns
- » We will send you a text message the day after your surgery inviting feedback
- » You are welcome to return to the clinic to see the doctor or nursing team for support at any time before you leave the Gold Coast, call our team to let us know
- » Our nursing team will check in with you at your DVT check on day 3 to 5
- » We will send you a text message after 6 weeks inviting feedback
- » Call our office to arrange a telehealth or face-to-face review appointment at any time.