

KNEE *high*

Demi Moore made knee-lift surgery famous. But is anyone actually getting it done?

BY KAREN HANSON



Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle boasts one truly memorable moment: Demi Moore's entrance on screen. Shot in dreamy slow motion, the actress runs along the beach in a black bikini, her tanned body stunningly taut and toned. Moore's physique caused jaws to drop in the theatres – and tongues to wag in the media. According to CBS, the actress spent \$330,000 US on cosmetic surgery and hired a small army – a personal trainer, a yoga instructor, a kick-boxing coach and a nutritionist – to help make her picture-perfect.

Perhaps she's not quite perfect, at least not in her own eyes. The 41-year-old actress is seemingly unhappy with her saggy knees and recently met with her Hollywood cosmetic surgeon for a much-publicized consult. Though "saggy" isn't a word usually used to describe Moore, this much is true: she has helped introduce the term "knee lift" into our collective cosmetic consciousness.

Yet despite recent headlines, there's next to no information available on knee-lift surgery. Among thousands of international Web sites not a single

hospital or clinic includes knee lifts in its list of services. The procedure doesn't even appear in the American Society of Plastic Surgeons data bank – or anywhere else in its public literature. The same holds for the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons. So is it even a procedure?

Dr. Julio Garcia confirms that it is a procedure, but one he generally advises against. The Nevada-based surgeon says he has received several inquiries about knee lifts – a procedure he has never performed – since Moore's story ran. He explains that during the operation, a curved incision is made where the skin on the front of the thigh begins to fold above the knee cap. The loose skin is then cut out and the wound stitched shut. "The big problem," he warns, "is that the scar may be quite large and that in time, due to everyday motion of the knee, the scar could spread."

Toronto-based surgeon Dr. Ali Adibfar elaborates: "Knee lifts are rarely performed because there's nowhere to hide the scar. Also, when you're operating above the knee, there's no stable place to anchor the stitches, as

there would be if you were operating close to the hip bone or the pubic bone. As a result, there's a lot of tension on the wound and this can result in a big, wide scar." Knee lifts, then, run the risk of what's technically known as hypertrophic scars – scars that are thick, raised and often darker in colour than the surrounding skin.

Knee lifts are occasionally performed on people who have lost 30 per cent or more of their body weight, either on their own or through gastric bypass surgery. These patients usually carry large amounts of loose skin. In such cases, an unsightly scar above the knee may be a fair trade-off for large hanging skin folds, which can cause irritation from chafing.

But what about the average person who hasn't experienced massive weight loss – the person who may, in fact, be in terrific shape? What causes the skin above the knee to sag? "The looseness of the skin stems from loss of elastic fibers, collagen and muscle mass as we age," says Garcia. "To firm the target area, you need to rebuild elastic fibres and develop the muscles above your knee cap."

KNEE-LIFT *alternatives*

1 INFUSION LIPOLYSIS

WHAT IS IT?

A medical alternative to liposuction, Infusion Lipolysis is a procedure designed to shrink fat cells – and can be used above the knee instead of a knee lift.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

“Adipose” is the anatomical term for loose connective tissue, which stores energy in the form of fat. Unlike liposuction, Infusion Lipolysis does not remove adipose cells but instead helps to deplete excess fat stored in adipose cells, thereby shrinking them back to their normal size.

“Liposuction can create saggier knees because fat is removed, but there is no accompanying skin tightening,” explains Toronto-based surgeon Dr. Stan Gore, founder and director of Lipidoctor Medical Slimming Clinics. “The beauty of Infusion Lipolysis is that in addition to shrinking fat cells, it is the only medical treatment in the world that actually tightens skin.”

THE PROCESS

Although Infusion Lipolysis is used to treat many different areas of the body – waist, neck, thighs – it can specifically target saggy knees. During a one-hour procedure, the doctor infuses a sterile solution of fat-mobilizing medications into the knee area through a fine catheter.

“This kick-starts fat breakdown and instantly mobilizes fat from adipose cells,” explains Dr. Gore. For the next three months, the patient applies custom-compounded transdermal creams to the knee area to continue the breakdown of fat as well as to block fat re-accumulation. “Your adipose cells shrink to their optimum size and your skin will tighten and smooth over as well.”

LENGTH OF TREATMENT

For most patients, the appearance of loose skin above the knees improves after 10 weeks.

RISKS

“You shouldn’t experience any side effects,” says Dr. Gore, because the substances are “a fraction of what a patient would take orally to achieve a similar result. Our carrier cream has a soybean lecithin base, which is usually hypoallergenic for most skin types.”

COST

A knee treatment costs about \$1,500. A full upper leg treatment including the knee costs about \$2,000. In many jurisdictions, the cost of the procedure and medications is tax-deductible as a medical expense.

2 INFUSION LIPOLYSIS AND BIO-IDENTICAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

If you’re over 40 and troubled by saggy skin, Dr. Gore recommends combining Infusion Lipolysis with transdermal bio-identical hormone replacement therapy.

“Loose skin is caused in large part by loss of elastic fibers,” he says. “This is considered to be an ‘aging’ process, but it has a definite preventable cause: perimenopause.” When women are in their early 40s they experience a decrease in estrogen, which cause a loss of skin elasticity.

Bio-identical hormone replacement therapy can give a 40-year-old woman the hormone level she had when she was 35. Produced from natural soy, the hormones are delivered in tiny amounts into the body through patches or cream.

LENGTH OF TREATMENT

Treatment time varies depending on your age, hormone levels and other factors.

RISKS

“We believe that using the identical hormones that the body produces, not synthetic variants, is safer and virtually free of side effects,” says Dr. Gore.

COST

About \$25 to \$40 a month.

3 MUSCLE BOUND

Michael Thurmond, a personal trainer who appears regularly on *Extreme Makeover*, and creator of the “6 Week Body Makeover Program” has designed the following knee-toning program, exclusively for Elevate readers.

“Leg extensions are the most efficient way to tighten the area above your knees,” says Thurmond. “Start with light weights and remember that the knee cap is delicate. Always stop immediately if you feel any discomfort.”

1. Sit up straight on the leg-extension machine with your knees bent and your feet behind the foot pad. Slowly straighten your legs. To build the area above the knee cap, turn your toes toward your face at the top of the extension. Slowly lower your legs.
2. Repeat #1 but point your toes both up and in toward each other, to tighten the flabby area on the outside of your knees.
3. Repeat #1, but point your toes both up and out, with your heels toward each other, to build and tighten the inner-leg area of your knees.

If you don’t have access to a gym, you can do the above exercises with ankle weights while seated on a stable chair or bench. Be sure to place a small pillow or towel under your legs to cushion your knees. **e**

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