

Weight Loss – closure through surgery

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With more than half of all American adults considered overweight or obese, the race is on to find sustainable, effective weight loss programs. The popularity of television shows like "The Biggest Loser," "Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition" and "Heavy" have proven that massive weight loss is possible, but it leaves many people with lingering reminders of their once ample frames: excess skin, sagging breasts, and loss of fullness in the face.

Orange County Cosmetic Surgeon Dr. Semira Bayati, MD, FACS, has seen her fair share of patients seeking closure through surgery. "Many patients are pleased by their massive weight loss, but unhappy with loose skin that must be removed through surgery," says Dr. Bayati, "for many people; having reconstructive surgery helps them finally accept and embrace their slimmer appearance."



Patients who lose significant amounts of weight through bariatric surgery or rigorous diet and exercise find they have been left with loose, hanging skin in many areas of their bodies. According to Dr. Bayati, "during weight gain your skin expands as you gain body fat. Over time your skin can lose elasticity and may not shrink with the rest of the body as you lose weight." Rapid weight loss can increase this problem, as the skin cannot "keep up" with the shrinking size of your body. Dr. Bayati works with post-bariatric surgery patients to eliminate excess skin and tighten areas to match the new contours of their bodies.

Body Contouring Procedures

Dr. Bayati performs a combination of body contouring procedures to help newly slimmed patients rid themselves of excess and sagging skin. "In some cases, excess skin causes medical problems for patients such as chafing that can lead to skin infections. Many patients experience increased discomfort during exercise due to excess skin, to the point where they can no longer exercise effectively." There are several regions of the body which Dr. Bayati can address with body contouring procedures:

- **Central Body Lift (belt lipectomy):** A central body lift focuses on areas such as the midsection, thighs, and buttocks. Dr. Bayati removes excess skin and fat, and lifts the remaining skin; pulling it taut for a smoother, more toned appearance.
- **Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty):** A tummy tuck, medically referred to as abdominoplasty, involves lifting the skin of the abdomen and tightening the abdominal muscles. Excess skin and fat are removed, resulting in a flatter stomach.
- **Medial Thigh Lift:** A medial thigh lift targets the area of the upper and inner thigh, tightening the skin and eliminating excess fat. This procedure not only improves the appearance of the thighs, but also reduces friction while walking.
- **Arm Lift (Brachioplasty):** Excess skin under the arms is an unsightly and rather common problem that can result from the changes of the skin due to weight loss. The excess skin is removed through a well-hidden incision that extends from the axilla to the elbow under the arm. This incision fades nicely over the following year with proper care and occasional laser fading.
- **Breast Lift (Mastopexy):** Following weight loss or the birth of a child, many women experience sagging or droopy breasts. Through a breast lift, Dr. Bayati is able to address the cosmetic issue of sagging and restore a more youthful look to the breasts. Depending on the amount of weight lost, volume replacement in the form of an implant may be necessary to restore the proper shape and volume to the breast.

Fat Grafting and Facial Fillers

According to Dr. Bayati, many patients who visit her practice experience a unique phenomenon: "up to a certain point, patients who are losing weight are told they look great. Once they pass a certain threshold, people begin to comment about their health and express concern." This switch from "healthy" weight loss to a "sickly" appearance can be attributed to the loss of fat in a person's face. This loss of fat can make a person appear to age rapidly and even seem to be in poor health.

A 2009 study published in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the medical journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, focused on the perceived effects of lifestyle habits on the appearance of identical twins. The study determined that after the age of 40, a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) correlated with a more youthful appearance.

To help patients maintain a youthful appearance and reflect their new healthy lifestyle, Dr. Bayati utilizes fat grafting procedures and facial fillers such as Juvederm®, Restalyne and Radiesse to increase the fullness of their face. During a fat grafting procedure, Dr. Bayati transfers fat from one area, such as the stomach or thighs, into the face. The result is a natural-looking, youthful appearance. Juvederm is a popular option to increase volume in the face and reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. The effects can last between six and nine months. Dr. Bayati uses Restalyne to fill fine lines around the mouth, plump up lips, fill depressed scars, and soften facial wrinkles. Results typically last three to nine months. Radiesse also is a popular option to decrease wrinkles and increase fullness in the lips, with long term results lasting between three and five years. "With a combination of Botox and facial fillers, you can achieve a 'liquid facelift,'" Says Dr. Bayati, "however depending on the severity of your facial aging; a facelift might be the more appropriate option."

According to Dr. Bayati, improving body contouring and restoring facial volume can help a patient achieve closure and satisfaction with their weight reduction. "For many patients, losing 100 or 200 pounds is not only life-changing, it is life-saving," says Dr. Bayati, "my work as a cosmetic surgeon gives them newfound confidence as a healthy, active person."

About Semira Bayati, MD, FACS: www.drbayati.com