

# Liposuction for the management of submental lymphedema in the head and neck cancer patient

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Liposuction is a novel and minimally invasive procedure for treating persistent submental lymphedema in patients with previous head and neck cancer, according to an article published in the June 2012 issue of *Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery*.

"Submental lymphedema is a common problem encountered by patients following treatment of head and [neck cancer](#)," the authors state.

It causes fluid deposition and persistent swelling of the soft tissues of the neck, leading to disfigurement and functional deficits. The aim of the study is to introduce the otolaryngologist–head and neck surgeon to the authors' new surgical technique: the use of liposuction to treat patients with submental lymphedema.

The surgical technique involves making an incision into the neck and using [liposuction](#) to remove fat and fluid from the treatment area. In the authors' small study on 10 patients, the surgery was well-tolerated by patients suffering submental lymphedema. The cohort had at least one year of cancer-free follow-up prior to the procedure. No patients in the cohort developed a recurrence in the neck, and there have been no complications. All 10 patients were satisfied with the results of their procedure and would recommend it to other patients, the authors' state.

The authors conclude, "The procedure is well tolerated under local

anesthesia and in our hands has proven to be very effective, resulting in high patient satisfaction. We plan to continue to offer this to our [head and neck cancer](#) patients with submental [lymphedema](#) and encourage others to consider it as part of their treatment strategy."

**More information:** "Liposuction for the Management of Submental Lymphedema in the Head and Neck Cancer Patient"  
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