



Posted On: **January 18, 2011** by **Patrick A. Malone**

"Awake" Liposuction: Malpractice Tragedy Just Waiting to Happen

A new style of cosmetic liposuction leaves patients fully awake with only local injections of lidocaine to control their pain at the site where the doctor is suctioning their body fat. It's a bad idea all around -- dangerous, painful, and a potential tragedy to boot.

The "Awake" treatment is touted as a way for patients to experience their liposuction fully awake. But why would anyone want to? It's not better for patients. It only allows

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the operating doctor to skip the extra charge of having an anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist present to keep the patient sedated safely.

Lidocaine, the local anesthetic drug typically used in so-called "tumescent liposuction," is no cakewalk drug. Too much injected into a patient's system can travel to the heart and numb the nerve fibers that transmit the electrical impulses that make the heart fire -- causing a rhythm disturbance or complete cardiac arrest.

A client of mine went into cardiac arrest and suffered severe brain damage before her heart could be restarted, in a liposuction procedure a few years ago in Montgomery County, Maryland. Her heart stopped for this very reason: too much lidocaine injected too quickly into her body fat. We brought a successful **malpractice lawsuit** for her against the plastic surgeon, but nothing could restore her health.

Lesson for patients: Anyone undergoing any type of surgery whatsoever should insist on at least the presence of a certified nurse anesthetist, and a doctor specializing in anesthesiology should be present too in the building to provide backup for any emergencies.

A chapter in my book, "**The Life You Save**," details this issue and other points about how to get the safest surgery.

Here is a **news article** alerting consumers about the dangers of the "Awake" technique.

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