



LIPOSUCTION TALE OF WOE. Rosemarie Mondeck wanted to have a bit of tummy fat liposuctioned away, using a new technique, in 1994. She went into cardiac arrest and died.

A mother's death. No one knows better than Edward Mondeck and his two children, ages 9 and 11, about risks. Two years ago, Mondeck's wife, Rosemarie, 39, decided to have a bit of tummy fat removed with a new procedure called tumescent liposuction. Typically, patients are primed just prior to surgery by injecting large amounts of extremely diluted local anesthetic and epinephrine, a drug that shrinks the capillaries, which reduces bleeding and, many practitioners say, makes it easier to suck out the fat. According to Mondeck and his lawyer, after the drugs were injected, Rosemarie went into cardiac arrest and died. Mondeck sued, and an undisclosed settlement was reached out of court. A lawyer for the physician involved declined to "get into the issues of the case" because of privacy concerns. "It was supposed to be a touch-up procedure," says Mondeck. "All she had was a fatty area above her bellybutton."

Horror stories, however, cannot compete with Americans' obsession with perfectly impossible models, actresses and celebrities who have long, skinny legs, half-cantaloupe breasts and beestung lips and washboard abs. Chilling tales need not automatically frighten everyone away. But candidates for cosmetic surgery need to think of themselves as patients who will have a serious operation, not as lumps of clay to be gentled into shape. ■

BY DOUG PODOLSKY WITH
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