

A simple method of unblocking the liposuction cannula

Sir,

Liposuction is an important tool in the armamentarium of a plastic surgeon. It is commonly used in a primary procedure to remove subcutaneous fat or as an adjunct to a separate procedure. Various types of cannula and types of liposuction devices are currently in the market. However, they all have a common problem which is they can develop blockages during their use and can hence be of much frustration to the surgeon when perform the procedure.

This is especially apparent during liposuction for gynaecomastia in the male breast. The fibrous tissue found in the breast bud is often a source of tissue that causes blockages in the liposuction cannula. Various attempts to knock it, flush out the fibrous tissue with saline amongst other more vigorous methods have been used. This delay can decrease the efficiency of the operation, cause more fatigue and frustration to the surgeon and can damage the liposuction cannula during the unblocking process.

Our literature search revealed no mention of techniques that could be employed to unblock the cannula in such a situation which is frequently encountered during our practice. We have hence devised a simple method of unblocking the liposuction cannula with no added cost to the procedure.

The infiltration needle that is used commonly for infiltration of tumescent solution prior to liposuction has a further use we found that can be conveniently

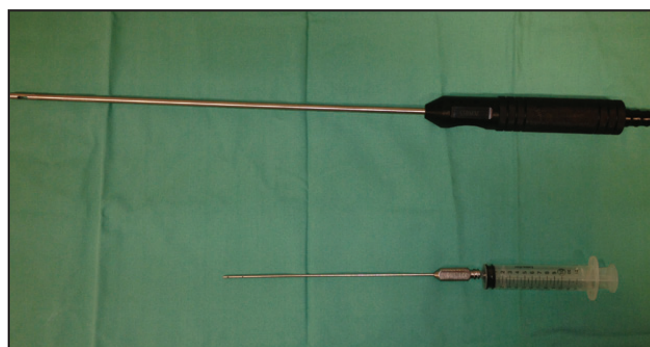


Figure 1: Photograph demonstrating the liposuction cannula and the infiltration needle



Figure 2: Photograph demonstrating the insertion of the infiltration needle within the liposuction cannula to facilitate unblocking with the syringe

used to flush out the liposuction cannula.^[1] Being of appropriate length, connecting the infiltration needle to a saline filled syringe could provide a conduit through which enough pressure could be generated to flush out any fibrous tissue. It is also small in caliber and will fit into the smallest sizes of liposuction cannulae. The liposuction cannula make has no specific preference with regards to company and this technique will work with any make of liposuction cannula provided it is a size 2 cannula with a BD make of infiltration needle. Figures 1 and 2 depict the method of unblocking the liposuction cannula.

From our practice, we find that this method of unblocking the liposuction cannula has been very effective and requires no additional equipment opened other than the tumescent infiltration needle that is already present prior to beginning the procedure. Saline can also be intermittently suctioned throughout the procedure to lubricate the cannula and prevent any fat from drying out within. The use of other needles such as longer infiltrating needles or spinal needles is a theoretical option of working but we suggest using the infiltration needle already available, which should normally suffice.

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