



Loose Skin After Weight Loss: What You Should Know

By Tami Fertig
February 19 2019

If you've been struggling to lose weight, adopting a [whole-food, plant-based diet](#) can be particularly rewarding. You'll shed excess weight while enjoying a variety of foods without having to count calories. But weight loss can also come with a frustrating side effect: loose skin.

"There tends to be damage of collagen and elastin, which are parts of the skin architecture, associated with significant weight loss," explains Jamie Kane, MD, director of the Northwell Health Center for Weight Management in West Syosset, New York. "However, what is not known is whether the skin is damaged in the process of weight gain or during weight loss." Some people's skin bounces back better than others, he adds, citing age, previous skin damage, amount of weight loss, and genetic predisposition as some of the factors involved. Simply put, it's hard to predict.

Whether you see this excess skin as a badge of honor—a daily reminder of your [weight-loss success story](#)—or are bothered by it, leaving it unchecked can cause discomfort, make staying active difficult, and pose various health problems. "Most commonly, there is a risk for local infection where there are skin folds, particularly in the lower abdomen," notes Kane. "Additionally, as the skin integrity is weak, there is a risk of blood accumulation, or hematoma, with trauma or surgery."

If you have modest sagging, Kane suggests nonsurgical treatments such as [radiofrequency](#) or [ultrasound](#), which work by stimulating collagen and elastin production. For more extreme cases, plastic surgery is an option that may or may not be covered by insurance, and it requires your weight to remain stable for at least six months following weight loss.

Can you prevent loose skin from forming in the first place? Not necessarily, though taking certain measures may help. "Steady weight loss, hydration, and proper nutrition create an ideal environment," says Kane, who promotes a plant-based lifestyle to his patients. Try losing weight gradually, swap out sugary drinks for water, and eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, especially those rich in vitamin C, which [research shows](#) is key for

building collagen fibers. Just remember to look at the big picture, advises Kane: "I try to focus on overall health, and if the one remaining side effect is loose skin, then we address it after weight loss is complete."

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.