

“WHY SHOULDN'T I LOOK GREAT?” Amanda's Story

AMANDA IS A PATIENT OF DR. MANUEL Peña. At 57, she represents the median age of cosmetic surgery patients in Southwest Florida. She says she looks better than she's ever looked in her life.

“I recently had liposuction on the whole lower half of my body, from my knees to just above my waist,” she says. “He did all around my knees, hips, stomach, outer and inner thighs, all those small areas around the waist and lower back, every tiny spot. This was my second lipo. The first time was in Kansas City in 1985. I was the first in my crowd to do it. Back then all doctors were able to do were the hips and outer thighs and it was a brutalizing experience. They jammed a large tube in and out. It was very physical for the surgeon.

“Afterward I was bruised all over, and I got a staph infection. Even though I was 20 years younger, my recovery took six extremely painful months.

“This time, the instrument was a very small tube. Dr. Peña has an incredibly gentle touch. It took barely three weeks to heal, and by the first week I was traveling and feeling fine. I am so thrilled. My skin is so smooth. My stomach is as flat as can be, and when someone puts their arm around my waist or on my back, they always say, ‘Man, you don't have an ounce of fat.’

“You know that oval space between your legs when you stand with your feet together? I have one! I never had one before. I don't expect plastic surgery to do my work for me. I'm a yoga teacher, and I work out and stay in shape. But I have great genes. I think I deserve to look and feel great, and I do.”

GL: Have you had other procedures?

“Well, I do the Botox, of course, and Restylane fillers for the face. I had my eyes done a few years ago. I had a lip implant in Naples [not by Dr. Peña] that was a disaster. It had to be redone twice. It got infected,

and I have a lot of scar tissue inside my lip. I've also had a brow lift, lower face and neck lift. These turned out great.

GL: We've heard statistics that 85 percent of women in some circles have had cosmetic procedures. Would you agree?

In Naples? Definitely more than that. My three best girlfriends—we're like sisters—went to Houston together to have our faces done. We're plastic surgery junkies, so we talk about it. But in general most people don't. You see someone you've known a long time and all of a sudden her lips are puffy. Lips don't just get puffy. Maybe 5 percent of women talk about it.

GL: Do you have any plans for future procedures?

Dr. Peña gets me once a year. That's what I can afford and have budgeted.

GL: So what are you planning for next year?

I'm thinking breasts. But possibly I'll have my lip fixed.

very small treatment tip to send very powerful energy pulses deep beneath the skin's surface. We have now learned that by using a wider tip, not going so deep and decreasing the energy level of each pulse we can cover a bigger area and actually achieve better results with less trauma to the skin. Similarly, with skin peels, the old way was a one-time peel that went deep and took weeks to heal. We've now found that a gentler, lighter touch over a period of time stimulates the skin to take care of itself, and recovery time is minimal.

DR. PEÑA: I would say precision is key. A dramatic example is the advance in liposuction technology. We now use smaller, more precise cannula, and apply lower levels of energy to melt and drain out the fat, for a smoother and more predictable result. When comparing the old cannula with the new, I use the analogy of an industrial vacuum hose versus the wand of a violin. Our new Vaser ultrasound technology allows us to pinpoint and get to those fat deposits that were traditionally harder to reach and remove, such as love handles and breast tissue on men. I tell my patients to visualize walking into a room filled with grapes that you want to get rid of. You could get out the vacuum and turn up the power and see what you get, or you can use a tiny probe to pinpoint each one, make it burst, and then allow the fluid to drain out. There's less trauma and faster recovery, and it's gentle enough for even the most sensitive areas like the upper arms and chin.