

# How to Get Rid of Loose Skin



**VENUS INDEX  
REPORTS**

**by John Barban and Bryan Chung**

## How to Get Rid of Loose Skin

**John Barban:** Welcome to the Venus Index podcast. I'm John Barban and with me is Bryan Chung and we are going to cover a question/topic that has come up a couple of times in the forum and that is how to get rid of loose skin.

So I guess the logical first step is to define what "loose skin" even is and how you end up getting it in the first place. So Bryan, can you help me figure out what people are talking about when they say "loose skin" and what are the actual clinical ways that you could end up with "loose skin".

**Bryan Chung:** So loose skin is something that we normally see in patients who have gone through massive weight loss, usually with bariatric surgery. The problem is that if that fat goes away after the skin has already been expanded to such an extent that the elasticity of your skin can't recover from the weight loss. The result is your skin is stretched to the point where it's permanently "deformed" and it can't rebound back to where it was before; and that's the definition of loose skin.

In other words, the skin is stretched beyond the point where its elasticity can recover when you lose the weight.

**John Barban:** Now, can you talk a little bit about the elasticity of the skin and what other situations can get you to the point where the skin has become so stretched that its elasticity is gone. I know you've said this before that the elasticity of the skin is to some degree related to age. Can we build a profile of the type of person who could actually expect to go through either bariatric surgery or rapid weight loss or something where they end up with loose skin? Like what are the factors that contribute to it.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, a lot of it probably has to do with age, so the older you get, the less elastic your skin becomes. So your skin is made up of collagen, and collagen is a

protein that has a certain degree of stretch, sort of like how an elastic band can stretch and then when you let it go, it returns back to normal. If you stretch a rubber band too far out, it will snap but that doesn't happen with collagen. What happens with collagen is that when you stretch it out past that point of elasticity, it stays stretched out.

As you age, your body isn't turning over collagen as quickly and so you are not getting rid of those really stretched out pieces and replacing them with the newer springier pieces. You are not remodeling anything per se in your system, it's just replacing the old one that don't really fit very well with ones that fit better, and it gets rid of the old ones.

So you don't really keep the old ones, the old ones eventually just start to degrade away or your body degrades and replaces them with new strands of collagen. As you age, you are not replacing those old pieces of collagen as quickly as you were when you were younger and so that manifest itself with your skin as being not as tight as it used to be because the looser pieces aren't being replaced by tighter pieces as quickly anymore.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** And then there is also the constant force of gravity, which creates a certain amount of force on your skin in the downward direction that also contributes a little bit to the looseness of your skin.

**John Barban:** So over time it's becoming less tight and you are just being dragged towards the earth, so the whole concept of "sagging" when you get older is quite literal actually.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, absolutely, and it's quite evident in areas of the body that hang off of your body more than ones that don't. So if you are quite obese and you have a piece of your tummy sort of hanging down, then that piece of hanging down tummy is going to

be pulled down towards the earth almost as a separate object, so to speak. Whereas if your tummy is flat it's sort of one piece of a larger wall...It's not its own protruding piece. And in women, breasts are subject to gravity and (as every woman knows or will know eventually as they grow older), their breasts will eventually start to droop, so that's an inevitable part of aging short of having surgical intervention.

And then your face also is subject to gravity, which is why some people develop jowls, even though they might not be that fat and they get this sort of little hanging jowls under their jaw line because your face is always being exposed to gravity. You can't prevent that from happening short of just lying down all day.

**John Barban:** So then it only becomes visible as you age and that the skin, like you said, remodels at a slower rate or you are working with less elasticity in the skin.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, exactly.

**John Barban:** Is there a general cutoff? Obviously the skin doesn't immediately getting looser right after birth, there is obviously a peak of the mountain and then you come back down as far as skin elasticity, so where is the age range where the skin is like, I don't know, for lack of a better word, at its healthiest/tightest, so to speak? And what's the sort of 5, 10, 20 year progression where it really starts?

**Bryan Chung:** So that has a lot to do with age, but it also has a lot to do with genetics and as sort of a substitute for genetics, it also has a lot to do with race. So people who are Asian or of African descent don't generally have as much sag as people who are of other races, mostly because the collagen content of their skin is generally higher and also there are young-looking non-Asian, non-African American or African-Canadian

people who look younger than they actually do and that is just the way that they were born and just the luck of their genetic draw.

So you could have somebody who is in their late 30s who is starting to show signs of aging whereas you could take another person who is also in their late 30s who isn't showing any signs of aging per se. So it's very individual, but somewhere around the late 40s and early 50s is generally when you are going to start seeing some of these signs, mostly in the face and less so in the rest of the body. And once you get into your late 50s and 60s is when you are going to see more smoothing out of that curve, so fewer people are getting away with looking a lot younger than they actually are.

**John Barban:** Right, and then upwards in the 80s and 90s too, everyone sort of ends up looking similar.

**Bryan Chung:** Yes.

**John Barban:** Right, so all the genetics and other things aside, when you are in your 80s and 90s, people will all just kind of start to look the same.

And so I guess my next question or thought is it seems that strength training somehow some way makes people look a bit tighter. What do you think as far as it having an effect on the skin or is that because the muscle underneath is a bit more bloated so the skin is being forced to tighten around the muscle, so to speak. Do you know where I'm going with that? Like it seems as though people who strength train have a bit more of a tight looks to their skin.

**Bryan Chung:** I would say anecdotally I kind of agree with you. I have seen some people who strength train almost on a professional level like almost professional

bodybuilder who also end up with loose skin though, so I don't know if that is necessarily the strength training per se so much as it is just not getting obese.

**John Barban:** Oh yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** And not getting sort of chubbier.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** Because as you get chubbier, your body volume increases and your skin is just sort of the wrapping around the bag of fluid that your body is. It's the bag. If you put more stuff in the bag in the form of fat, then the bag has to stretch to accommodate that fluid (or that stuff in the bag) and if you stretch the bag to the point where it's not able to come back to where it was before, then you're going to end up with loose skin.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** Whereas you can never get there if you never get chubbier and the bag never really ever gets a whole lot fuller or at least doesn't get a whole lot fuller to the point where it sort of getting to that permanent stretch state, then you are more likely to be able to rebound from that.

**John Barban:** Is there any data on what that degree is or that's completely person to person with the genetic influences.

**Bryan Chung:** It's very person to person. The bariatric patients, some of them end up with a lot of loose skin, but they are losing like between 200 or 150 pounds or even 100 pounds, so it's a lot of weight that they are losing. Something on that level, it wouldn't be unusual to see some loose skin or a lot of loose skin where they need to have surgery to fix it because there is no other way to deal with it. I think a good example of it is if you take a garbage bag and you stretch the garbage bag with stuff in it, and do you ever notice that the garbage bag sort of gets a little thin in some areas?

**John Barban:** Yeah, it becomes more transparent.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, I guess like a little translucent.

**John Barban:** Yes.

**Bryan Chung:** That's the point where you stretch the bag to the point where it's never going to come back to where it was before.

**John Barban:** And the area is weak and can puff out more than the rest of the bag.

**Bryan Chung:** Exactly.

**John Barban:** Yeah, that's a great analogy.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, it's the same idea.

**John Barban:** Does the rate of the weight loss matter, or once you've been that big and the skin is that stretched then it doesn't matter how fast the weight comes off? In other words, once it's stretched, it's stretched?

**Bryan Chung:** I think it's hard to tell because there are two classes. You are looking at two different kinds of people, so you are looking at one person who is losing fat at a very fast rate and you are looking at another person who let's say starts out at the same size and it takes them seven years or five years to lose the weight, let's say. Certainly the person who is losing it over a longer period of time has a little bit of a chance where their skin is going to remodel to the point where they might not end up with as much loose skin because again the collagen is turning over all the time.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** So if as your inside body gets smaller, the collagen will remodel a little bit to try to accommodate that, so there is a little bit of elasticity there that's still left and it's going to rebound...and then as you get smaller maybe that rebound will accommodate and you won't end up with loose skin. And then as you get a little smaller and there is enough turnover that now you've developed a little more rebound so then you're taking advantage of that little rebound and a little more rebound, so that you don't end up with quite as much loose skin. But someone who just drops it fast there is literally no time for any rebound....there is no time for any turn over and it's just basically like deflating a balloon.

**John Barban:** Right, but that doesn't apply to everyone.



**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, that may not even be the case for everyone. We have seen patients who have lost a lot of weight by themselves and they don't end up in the same state, but at the same time the bariatric patients are a weight class to themselves.

**John Barban:** Right, I mean, you are talking 100-plus pounds to lose and over.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, I mean, we're talking about people who are like 350 or 400 pounds.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** So I don't know if anybody listening to the Venus Index is anywhere in that range.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** So I don't know how that would necessarily fly. I've never seen or met a patient who used to be 400 pounds and is now 115.

**John Barban:** Right, exactly. Okay, so that leads perfectly into the next question, who are the people who potentially could end up with loose skin? Can we give a rough cutoff? Like if you got 60 pounds to lose, odds are you're not big enough. But if you have somewhere between 80 or 90 or 100, now you might be big enough that it could happen. Do you know what I mean?

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** Or at least a rough range, a gradual range.

**Bryan Chung:** Well, here is the thing. We are also dealing with a fundamental disconnect in language when we talk about massive weight loss and weight loss and loose skin because even when you asked the question, it's like well, is there a boundary 60 pounds, a 100 pounds and that in and of itself is a problematic question because it's not so much as the poundage that you are losing.

**John Barban:** Ah but it's more likely a volume...Because what if I'm talking about a 4'11 person or a 6'5 person?

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, or what if their fat is distributed ever so differently than the next person to them who weighs exactly the same, who has lost exactly the same poundage of weight.

**John Barban:** Sure, okay, we'll then take it out of those terms. Okay, I think you've got the idea of what I'm trying to ask.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, I do.

**John Barban:** In general, who is potentially susceptible to ending up with loose skin? Like profile a couple of people, an avatar of the type of person and fill in all the variables. It could be if genetics plays a role or all the things. I'm trying to get the listener to be like, "Oh yeah, I might fit that or no, that's not me..."

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** Or is it really not that clear.

**Bryan Chung:** I don't think it is as clear as that because you are looking at factors of age. You are looking at factors of how big are you right now versus how big you will be when your transformation is "done".

And then on top of that you have to know how your volume is distributed in your body individually. For example we've seen guys go from a 40-inch waist down to a 30-inch waist on the Adonis side of things and they don't have loose skin.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** And so for me to say, "Well, if you're going from a 40 to a 30, that might be fine for some people and it might not be for others so it's really hard to make that boundary cut off, and a lot of this is shaped by the experiences that we've had with the Adonis.

For example after seeing Jason's Adonis Transformation and seeing his measurements I said, "I would never have thought that Jason wouldn't have any loose skin," but he doesn't.

**John Barban:** Oh yeah, he looks fantastic.

**Bryan Chung:** Right. So at the same time Jason is young. I can't remember exactly how old Jason is, but he is his early 30s I think.

**John Barban:** Yeah, early to mid-30s.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, and the elasticity tends to last a little longer with guys, or that's what I think at any rate. I don't have anything to back that one particularly.

**John Barban:** That's your observation.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, exactly. And so there is that, and the classic idea of skin elasticity and what we call 'tissue expansion' in plastic surgery would be pregnancy.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** So there are women who get pregnant in their 20s and their waist size goes up two or threefold. And when they have their baby they go through the recovery phase and you can't even tell that they had a baby.

**John Barban:** No loose skin, nothing.

**Bryan Chung:** No loose skin, nothing. But you can take another one with the same age as the other lady who has no loose skin, and she ends with stretch marks. She ends up with loose skin after her pregnancy and there is not really a good indicator as to defining why this woman and not that woman.

**John Barban:** So part of it could be the genetic makeup of how much collagen and how fast it's turning over and all of that stuff.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, absolutely.

**John Barban:** So just theorizing about it, I wonder if one day, I don't know if this research is being done, but if there is a way to profile the elastic potential of the skin, if there is a way to measure that, do you know what I mean? Like if there was some sort of histological thing where you could say, "Oh, your collagen content is way higher than the next person over" or something like that.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, it's possible, but I don't think that kind of technology would be available. I mean, the technology exist now to do that.

**John Barban:** But not in any kind of way where you could pre-screen somebody like that.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** Yeah, and the only way that would even be done right now is within a study, but it isn't ready to be brought to market.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** Okay, and that's a great example you just brought up because you said the same age, the same everything. One gets stretch marks and one doesn't. So I hope people understand how much genetic variation there is. Even though people all seem similar, there are little subtleties like this that are really legitimate. Like you said Jason came down from a long way with no stretch marks, but a couple of other guys who had come down similar with Jason and even younger did seem to have a little bit of loose skin. And like you said, if you added up all the variables and lined them up side by side, you'd likely say, "Well, I would expect both of them to finish in their after picture almost exactly the same", but one ends up with slightly looser skin than the other and

there is nothing to be said about it besides genetic variation. I don't think it only comes down to diet or training because everyone is kind of doing the same thing, at least with our people.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, and I think it's important that people don't overlook that, even though it's a small genetic variation, the effects are dramatically different from one person to the other.

**John Barban:** Visually, yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** Visually, yes, and even the fact that one person develops stretch marks versus another person who might not develop stretch marks is mostly a genetic issue and has nothing to do with things like belly moisturizer or belly creams.

**John Barban:** Right, yeah. And we all look the same in clothes. You ladies can all be at your ideal Venus Index, but you are all going to have your own look. And I say that to the guys all the time. A lot of guys who are at their ideal Adonis Index still look very similar in a t-shirt, but when you see them with their shirt off they have their own look. Their muscles hang a certain way. Their shoulders and everything else, they are just slightly different, so everyone is basically unique. I mean, no two bodies look identical when you see them, even if they are the same height, the same measurements, more or less the same body fat level, everyone still has their own look and I guess the skin is just further proof of how each person has just got their own thing going on.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** So I guess the last thing we should cover is the mistakes or the erroneous assumption of what loose skin is versus just some fat to lose.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, so loose skin is something that generally hangs and you have to think about it in terms of whether it's hanging because there is fat that's dragging it down versus just being loose. And loose skin looks a lot different than hanging fat, mostly because it has very little fat in it and when you pinch it, it doesn't have that sort of squishy fatty feel to it. It feels like, well, loose skin as opposed to sort of if you have a little bit of a muffin top, then that's not loose skin, that's fat.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** I think everybody can agree that a muffin top is not loose skin.

**John Barban:** Yeah.

**Bryan Chung:** So if you have that sort of muffin top look and you are wondering, "Is this loose skin?" Well, it's not. There is fat under that skin. If you have genuine loose skin, when you pinch it, it doesn't feel like there is fat in it. It just feels like two very thin pieces of skin rubbing against one another...I don't know how else to explain it.

**John Barban:** Oh, that's good. That's a good explanation. I guess it would require a couple of visual examples, but in general, it's kind of obvious. What you are saying is they are obviously different.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** And one of the mistakes people make is assuming that another pound or two of fat to get rid of that might be sort of just sitting in the spare tire lower abdomen

region. Some people may just think that since the rest of the upper abdominal area sort of tightens up, but the fat is not evenly distributed when you gain it, so even though you lose it systematically, you lose it that lower ab area last.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** And so there is this kind of ring of fat around the bottom of your abs that sort sits there.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** It gives the illusion that it's the sagging loose skin, when really it's just another pound or two of fat that still has to go.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** But that's the mistake a lot of people make. They assume, "Oh, I've got this loose skin." Then I say, "No, actually you just have another two pounds of fat."

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah, and you might have loose skin in other parts of your body, certainly the upper arms and the legs are also prone to having those areas as well. But the thing is that if you think you have loose skin, you need to look at how much fat is on the rest of your body...because if you are otherwise completely shredded or ripped and you have this sort of hanging thing of skin, well, that's probably loose skin. If you are not completely ripped or at least very slim or quite slim...

**John Barban:** Or very lean.



**Bryan Chung:** Or lean, yeah, lean is a better word, I think, and you have this sort of hanging bit of stuff, then that might not be loose skin. That might still be fat because you still have enough fat on your body to explain that.

**John Barban:** Yeah, I guess the simplest way of thinking of it is all the lines will be there. For guys, there will be full on six-pack before they can really tell if there is loose skin.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** But for girls, you will likely have nice lines in your arms, the line dividing your shoulder from your biceps and triceps. Those kind of vertical lines on either side of your abdominal area, not so much the cross lines because it's kind of unrealistic for girls to get to that. But until you've got those kind of lines happening and maybe a little bit of visible top two abs, until you're at that degree, I guess what Bryan is trying to say is you still have enough fat on you that you can't even see loose skin yet.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** Oh okay, well, I think we did a pretty good job of walking them through that. I think we've covered the topic. I'm sure more stuff will come up along the way, but have you got anything else that you thought was needed to be said that we didn't hit?

**Bryan Chung:** I don't think so. Certainly if you do have loose skin, then unfortunately the only thing that can be done about it is surgery.

**John Barban:** Right.

**Bryan Chung:** So if that is genuinely your problem, then I think it's important to know that there are no non-surgical options for you.

**John Barban:** Yeah, there is no cream or a fancy way to treat it or diet that can do anything for it.

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** So that's a good thing. I'm glad you brought that up. So the take home message to wrap it up.

- A. We can't really profile who the type of person is who may get loose skin because we've seen it all over the board. Some people get it, some people don't. Even with post-pregnancy, you may or may not, we just really don't know. So that's something you have to monitor.
- B. Don't fool yourself into thinking a few more pounds of fat that you need to lose is loose skin, you've got to be honest with yourself.
- C. If you have determined you really do have loose skin, like you said, surgery might be an option, and I guess the only real way of determining is getting an assessment from a qualified physician.

**Bryan Chung:** A qualified plastic surgeon.

**John Barban:** Yes a plastic surgeon. And they aren't going to be fooled, like if you have some fat to lose, the plastic surgeon will look at you and say, "Oh, yeah, that's not loose skin."

**Bryan Chung:** Yeah.

**John Barban:** All right, for Bryan Chung, I'm John Barban and that's your Venus Index podcast.