

BEAUTY

# No, BBLs Don't Stink

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Photo: ronstik/Getty Images

BBLs, or Brazilian butt lifts, are one of the most contentious plastic-surgery procedures, scrutinized regularly (and appropriately) for their high mortality rates and contributions to the ever-expanding universe of unrealistic beauty standards. Recently social media has reprised an urban legend that began circulating in 2024, and it's not just the appearance and potential safety risks of BBLs facing pushback: The smell of BBLs is now facing critiques.

On TikTok, the phrase "BBL smell" has become a trending topic with a growing consensus forming that Brazilian butt lifts emit a foul odor. Various tabloids and other outlets aggregated

stories about the alleged smell. There are hundreds of videos under the “BBL smell” hashtag, and these posts have raked in millions of views. Even Cardi B found herself roped into the odd-odor discourse, and the rapper actually took to social media to refute claims that NFL player Stefon Diggs dumped her because of an alleged BBL smell.

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People spreading the narrative that BBLs stink include content creators who have either dated or been in close proximity to women with the surgery. These BBL-smell enthusiasts have compared the supposed stench to “cheesy fries,” stinky socks, and even earring backs. Yikes.

Now, with any surgical procedure, infection is always a risk, and bacteria can lead to odor once mixed with other surfaces and materials. But still, why is all the funk discourse focused on BBLs specifically? You never hear about breast augmentations being spoken about in the same way, and no one ever likens the aroma of rhinoplasties to “dumpster juice.”

## What is a BBL?

During a BBL, fat from other areas of the body is siphoned out through liposuction and placed into the buttock and hip area. This allows people to change the shape of their body and add volume to places where they otherwise wouldn't have it.

## Do BBLs smell?

No. “When somebody is well healed after a minimally invasive surgical procedure like a BBL, there’s no real reason why things should smell,” says board-certified plastic surgeon Dr. Sean McNally.

“When we’re moving the fat into the butt, some of it will go away, and usually your body absorbs it. But if the surgery is not done properly, you can form lumps of dead fat called fat necrosis,” says board-certified plastic surgeon Dr. Shim Ching.

Fat necrosis is essentially rotting flesh, which sounds a lot smellier than it is. In fact, when fat necrosis occurs in the body, it doesn’t emit any odor at all. “Necrotic material doesn’t really have a smell. So I think this BBL smell is more of an urban myth,” says Dr. Ching.

People have also speculated that the BBL odor is a result of post-surgery drainage fluid, which can happen after liposuction.

“Immediately after the liposuction procedure, there is a fluid that leaks out from the incisions in the first few days post-op,” says board-certified plastic surgeon Dr. Sam Lin. But barring an infection, no odor should be coming from the leakage itself. “A low-lying infection may smell, but if everything is healed up, there would be no reason why a scent would be emanating from inside of your human body,” says Dr. McNally.

If anything, Dr. McNally says that any smells occurring are likely a result of external factors, like unwashed post-op garments or a lack of proper hygiene, which could happen to anyone, BBL or not.

## Why is everyone all of a sudden saying BBLs smell?

Perhaps the most likely reason BBLs have become the center of all this discourse is the result of growing fatigue surrounding the once-buzzy surgery.

“There was a huge push for BBLs in the beginning, and now we’re starting to pare that back to something a little more modest,” says Dr. McNally. “People are starting to get disenchanted with the procedure as a whole.”

By and large, people generally feel more comfortable talking down on cosmetically altered bodies in a way they wouldn’t dare approach “natural” bodies, especially as societal beauty standards shift back toward thinner physiques.

Now that the “golden age” of the BBL is over, Dr. McNally says the accumulation of surgical complications and poorly done procedures has shifted the collective perspective on the procedure.