

Aftercare Information

Tummy Tuck



This information has been provided to enhance your journey through your treatment pathway. We recommend that read this advice and if you are unsure about anything then please do not hesitate to contact us.

General enquiries: 01892 257357 (Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm).
For out of hours emergencies and at weekends, please call 07753 211771.

Procedure Information

Preparation before surgery:

- Smoking (cigarettes or e-cigarette with nicotine) - you should avoid or significantly reduce the amount you smoke. Nicotine causes the blood vessels to close up and this effect lasts for 45 - 60 minutes following inhalation. It is one of the most important requirements to lower the risk of postoperative infection and other healing complications. Ideally we would suggest to avoid smoking for a minimum of one month before and after surgery.
- After surgery you need to sleep elevated and on your back for 14 days, therefore ensure you have enough pillows or a V-Pillow to help with your comfort. You DO NOT need to sleep upright - 1 - 2 pillows to aid drainage of the swelling.
- Please arrange transport home with a family member or friend. They can drop you to the hospital and see you after your surgery. If you want a family member to stay with you then you would need to pay for an extra bed (please do let us know so we can organise).
- You will require regular pain relief for the first week or two, please ensure you have some paracetamol or ibuprofen available at home also.
- Do NOT take Arnica or herbal tablets 10 days before and 3 days after your surgery. This will significantly reduce your risk of bruising.
- We will provide you with one surgical garment which the surgeon will put on after the procedure. If you wish you purchase another, we do sell them for £40. Alternatively, you can purchase post surgical bras from Marks and Spencers.
- Please ensure you have taken enough time off work. You can return to office type work after 14 days, any manual work 21 days or longer (surgeon will advise)
- You will have limited mobility for the first week, ensure childcare is arranged or you have someone to help you.
- You will have a pre-assessment with the hospital about one week before your surgery. They will send you a designated date in the post/email. This is vital you attend. If you do not attend the surgery could be cancelled.
- You will have 1 - 2 night stay at the hospital, do pack appropriately
- You will only find out your admission time the day before your surgery. Please call the Hospital for this (please do anticipate this could be as early as 7:00 am). They will also notify you of your staying details which are explained later in this document.

Procedure Information

The day of surgery:

If you are scheduled for general anaesthetic, please observe the following:

- Do not eat anything up to 6 hours before your surgery. This includes boiled sweets and chewing gum.
- Do not drink anything but water up to 4 hours before your surgery. Please stop drinking altogether up to 2 hours before your surgery.
- Please arrive at the hospital for your admission time.

Your time of arrival at the hospital is generally kept to as short a time as possible before surgery to minimise the time before your operation. However, please be advised that sometimes your surgery may be delayed. We will advise you as soon as possible if there are any delays to your procedure.

Procedure Information

Aftercare in the following days after surgery

We will call you a few days after your surgery to see how you are feeling and to also make follow up appointments. This will consist of:

- Approx 1 week follow up with our nurse and wound care specialist.
- Approx 6 week follow up with your surgeon.
- Approx 6 month follow up with our nurse and wound care specialist.

If you have any concerns our door is always open and more follow up appointments can be scheduled.

- You can shower the day after surgery and continue to shower daily. You can use shower gel to wash just make sure it's thoroughly rinsed around the incisions. Please leave the tape on until you come for your follow up appointment. The tape is very hard wearing and shouldn't come off in the shower, so you can get it wet. You can use a hair dryer on a cool setting to dry the tape after.
- We recommend wearing your compression garment for a minimum of six weeks after surgery (remove it prior to showering and if the garment needs washing)
- Discomfort, swelling and numbness is expected.
- After the surgery it will take a little while for walking to become comfortable again, as a lot of excess skin has been removed. It's important you do continue to walk around, this saves you from getting back discomfort and becoming stiff.
- Sleep elevated on a few pillows, avoid laying on your front for a few weeks.
- Abdominoplasties can impact your quality of sleep, do not be alarmed if you feel tired and in a daze.
- Bruising is likely to appear and will subside over the next few weeks.
- Initial fluid leakage and bloody staining is common during the first few days
- Pain killers may be needed during this stage - we advise regular paracetamol (1 g - two tablets) and ibuprofen (200 mg 1 tablet) , alternating every two hours (unless you react adversely to either). This will help to maintain a pain-free status rather than trying to get on top of the pain once it is already present.
- Keep hydrated and keep your strength up by eating a healthy diet.

Procedure Information

Aftercare in the following days after surgery

- You will have limited mobility in the first week. For the first 2 days try and keep arm movement to minimum. Your arms should not be used to support your body or lift anything heavy.
- When you return for your 1 week follow up the nurse will advise you on how to massage your tummy in the next coming weeks. It's important you massage the area to help soften, reduce swelling and make the recovery process easier for you.

Procedure Information

Aftercare in the following weeks

- Most of the swelling and bruising should have diminished within 4-6 weeks after surgery and you will not require as many painkillers, compared to the first week following surgery.
- If you feel comfortable to drive, you can after the second week. You need to ensure you could perform an emergency stop successfully. Avoid driving if you are taking a lot of painkillers as this can make you drowsy. The seatbelt will be sitting over your scar, so be advised that for long journeys this might be uncomfortable.
- You should avoid any long distance travel or long haul flights for at least 6 weeks following surgery to this area and if you have had a general anaesthetic. You will be given anti-thrombotic stockings at the time of your admission and you should continue to wear these at home for 6 weeks and especially if you are travelling during this time.
- After 6 weeks of surgery your tummy should start to feel softer and more natural. The scars should have started to fade. You can start massaging your scars with moisturiser or oil if they are lumpy. Please remember healing is a gradual process and your scars may remain slightly pink for up to 6-12 months.
- In the next few months your nerves will start to join together, this can cause a pins and needle sensation and itchiness. Your skin loses its moisturising ability following surgery and you should start softly moisturising the area after two weeks. This will help to prevent dry skin and an itchy feeling.

Procedure Information

Photographic examples



Before surgery



3 months after surgery

Procedure Information

Frequently Asked Questions

When can I start exercising?

You can start low impact exercise 6 weeks after surgery, such as: walking or gentle bike rides. Please avoid running, pectoral exercises, abdominal crunches and weight lifting for about 2 - 3 months after surgery.

When can I start sleeping on my front?

This will differ from patient to patient, therefore see which position you find most comfortable. After 4 weeks you can sleep on your front.

When can I start driving?

We recommend after about 1 week minimum. You need to be able to perform an emergency stop safely before you resume driving. Remember the seatbelt will rest across your scar as well and this might be uncomfortable in the first week or two.

When can I resume manual work or heavy lifting (housework, gardening, picking up children etc)?

You can resume heavy lifting after 6 weeks. Please listen to your body however if you need more time, allow for this as patients heal at different rates.

When can I go swimming or have a bath?

You are not to submerge the wounds for a minimum of 2 weeks. This is stagnant water therefore to help prevent from infections you cannot resume until the incisions have completely healed (your surgeon or nurse will advise you). However, you can have a shower daily as this is flowing water.

When can I fly?

You can fly 6 weeks after surgery. Ensure movement of the legs and feet after every few hours. It would be advisable to wear flight stockings/ VTE stockings for your journey to help prevent any clots forming in the calves.

When can I go into the sun?

We recommend protecting the incision from sunlight for a year after surgery, using an SPF 50+. In the first 6 - 9 months following the surgery, the scars are immature. Even with a light top on, if the sun UV rays hits the scars they will go red. This will be the case until the scar matures, fades and becomes paler. This usually occurs by 9 months. After this time the scarred area will behave like your normal skin. Therefore prior to this time we advise high protection creams to prevent burning of the area.

I still feel the abdomen is swollen and it has been 6 weeks. Is this normal?

Yes it is normal. The swelling and overall effect from the surgery will not be apparent for at least 3 - 6 months from the time of surgery. It is quite normal to still be quite stiff and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, queries.

How long will it take for my scar to fade?

It can take approximately 12-18 months before the scar fades. It will gradually get less red month by month. 2 weeks after your surgery you can start massaging the scar with rose oil, bio oil or any moisturiser. This should help speed the process of flattening and softening.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, queries or concerns.

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