

Proper diet and exercise do not always result in the flat stomach you'd hoped for. Loose skin, excess fat and lax tummy muscles, can sometimes limit your appearance, no matter what you do. If you are bothered by the less than sleek look of your stomach, a tummy tuck (abdominoplasty) may be a good option for you.

A tummy tuck surgically removes redundant skin and unwanted fat from the abdominal area and may also tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall. The result is a tighter, flatter belly.

Am I a good candidate for abdominoplasty?

Abdominoplasty offers great benefits to both men and women of all ages. It is best suited to those in relatively good shape, but with loose abdominal fat that won't respond to diet or exercise.

People bothered by any of the following conditions, are often good candidates for a tummy tuck:

- Loose, sagging abdominal skin
- Excess fat in the abdominal area
- A protruding abdomen
- Abdominal muscles weakened by pregnancy or aging

Because pregnancy and weight fluctuation can alter your tummy tuck result after surgery, you should postpone your procedures until you have completed your family and your weight is stable. Scars from previous surgeries can limit your result.

What does the surgery involve and what will the scars be like?

The procedures generally use a horizontal incision above the pubic area. Where possible, the cut will be kept within average swimsuit lines. The length will depend upon the amount of loose skin to be removed.

With this method we can tighten the abdominal muscles, if needed, by pulling them together and stitching them into place. Though it is not always possible to eliminate them all, stretch marks and lower abdominal scars are often removed with the excess skin. A second incision around the umbilicus is used so the skin can be pulled down. In this instance, the umbilicus will remain intact in the underlying tissue, but will be exposed through a new section of skin. Although the umbilical position remains unchanged, its appearance may be slightly altered but this is minimized with our techniques.

Are there other options?

A full, traditional tummy tuck is not needed for all patients. Some will achieve the results they seek with a limited or "mini" abdominoplasty. Liposuction may also meet the needs of others. During consultation we will explain your options and evaluate if any are right for you.

When will I see my results and how long will they last?

Soon after surgery, you may begin to notice an improvement to your abdominal shape. As you heal and your swelling subsides, your firmer, trim contour will begin to emerge. Though your tummy tuck scarring is permanent, it is, for the most part, easy to conceal beneath undergarments and will fade significantly over time.

Generally, you can expect long-lasting results from your abdominoplasty procedure. If you maintain a fairly steady weight, you can keep your new shape for many years. Gravity, aging, and weight fluctuation may loosen the abdominal skin somewhat however, if this occurs, additional surgical treatment can be sort.

What are the risks of abdominoplasty?

This surgery is a common aesthetic procedure with generally very good results. Nevertheless, there are always risks associated with surgery and specific complications associated with abdominoplasty surgery procedures.

Post-operative complications such as infection and blood clots are rare, but can occur. Infections can be treated with drainage and antibiotics, but will prolong your recovery. You can reduce the risk of blood clots by moving around as soon after surgery as possible. Poor healing, which results in conspicuous scars, may necessitate a second operation.

Smokers are advised to discontinue smoking 3 weeks prior and 3 weeks after surgery. Smoking, among other harmful side effects, decreases blood flow to the skin, increases the risk of complications and delays healing.

How is the recovery?

We use advanced techniques to speed recovery in all patients. Though you will feelsome soreness, it is generally well controlled with pain relief. To promote blood circulation, you will be encouraged to get up and move around soon after surgery. Bending and lifting, however, should be avoided at this stage.

Though everyone heals at a different pace, your recovery will roughly follow this general time line:

Within the first 7-10 days

- Swelling and bruising will reach their peak
- You should avoid heavy lifting or over stretching.
- You will be seen one week after your surgery, to review your progress

After several weeks

- Activity and exercise can be gradually increase
- Non-strenuous work can resume
- Bruising and swelling will continue to subside
- You will be seen approx four weeks post surgery to review your progress

After a few months

- Tightness will disappear
- Sensation may slowly improve
- Your incision line may begin to fade
- You will be seen approx three months after surgery to review your progress

Patient Aftercare

You will be discharged from hospital either 1-2 days post procedure depending on how you are feeling and once the medical team are happy.

You will have been fitted with your surgical support garment which needs to be worn as much as possible for 4-6 weeks post surgery. The aim of the garment is to support you through the healing process and will assist with the swelling leaving you with a better cosmetic result in the longer term.

In the first week post surgery it is important that you adhere to the following do's and don'ts

- Ensure that you have a daily shower, taking your garment off and ensuring that you blow dry the surgical tape dry with a hair dryer on a cool setting.
- Ensure that you keep well hydrated and eat a nutritious and well balance diet to aid wound healing.
- Do not smoke.
- Ensure that you try and maintain regular bowel movements to avoid putting any unnecessary strain on the stomach. Please do let us know if you need any laxatives to assist with this if you suffer from constipation.
- It is normal to feel bloated after the procedure and this will subside as you recover.
- If you need to cough, then it is advisable to keep a rolled up towel near you and use the towel as a support to press against your tummy to allow you to cough. We can show you how to do this!
- Avoid any heavy lifting, over stretching and exertion.
- You will feel tired so ensure that you have rests as you require them.
- Try and take a gentle stroll to ensure good circulation.

You will have a follow up appointment at 7 days post surgery to ensure you are recovering well, at this point we will remove your dressings and assess your progress. You will be advised on whether you require any further dressings.

It is also important that you continue to keep an eye on your wound and that you look out for any signs of infection which include redness, heat, increased pain or tenderness and lastly discharge from the wound. It is important that you contact us if you notice any of these so that we can see you and assess you.

On occasion and as part of the body's healing process, it is possible to get a build up of fluid under the skin called seroma. This is harmless but will require attention from the clinical team as it can be easily drained away with a small needle. Signs that you may have a seroma include a "sloshy" feeling in your tummy that you can feel fluid moving when you walk. It may also present as an increase in swelling.

It is nothing to worry about but it is important that you inform us as soon as possible so that we can see you and drain any fluid away for you.

Lastly, remember that the swelling and inflammation will take 3-6 months to settle post abdominoplasty and it is at that stage that you will see you final result.