



Cosmetic Image Clinics

TUMMY TUCK (Abdominoplasty)

Abdominoplasty is a major surgical procedure to remove excess skin and fat from the middle and lower abdomen. It also helps to tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall, flatten the stomach and reduce the appearance of stretch marks.

When the abdomen is out of proportion with the rest of the body, apart from the self consciousness you may feel about your appearance, it can cause a number of medical problems. An overly large abdomen can cause strain on the back and posture difficulties, and those with loose skin, may suffer recurrent infections under the skin folds. Often these areas don't respond to diet and exercise, causing frustration and embarrassment.

You may choose to undergo abdominoplasty, also called tummy tuck, for a variety of reasons:

- To remove a large fat deposit.
- To remove loose abdominal skin after weight loss
- To improve skin elasticity if you are an older patient
- To improve your muscle and skin tone after multiple pregnancies

Liposuction may be a suitable alternative if you have excessive fatty tissue that can be held in one hand without a muscle bulge or skin overhang. It is a less invasive method for fat removal involving minimal scarring. It is usually more suitable for younger patients with good skin elasticity. Where large fat deposits are involved and there is bulging of the abdominal muscles or excessive skin and fat hanging over the pubic region, you most likely need a tummy tuck. If the excessive tissue is mostly below the umbilicus (navel) then a smaller operation called a "mini-tuck" will be performed.

The Surgery

Abdominoplasty is usually performed as a day procedure within a hospital facility, under general anaesthesia. In extensive cases or if there are other health problems, an overnight stay will be arranged.

The surgical method depends on the individual patient. Most commonly, the surgeon will make an incision slightly above the pubic area. A second incision is made to free the navel from surrounding tissue. Next, the surgeon separates the skin from the abdominal wall all the way up to your diaphragm, and lifts a large skin flap to reveal the vertical muscles in your abdomen. These muscles are tightened by being pulled closer together and stitched into their new position. This provides a firmer abdominal wall and reduces the waistline. The skin flap is then stretched down and the extra skin is removed. A new hole is cut for your navel, which is then stitched in place. Finally, the incisions will be stitched, dressings will be applied, and a temporary tube may be inserted to drain excess fluid from the surgical site.



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With Partial Abdominoplasty (Mini Tummy Tuck), the incision above the pubic area is much shorter and the navel may not be moved, although it may be pulled into a slightly distorted shape as the skin is tightened and stitched. The skin is separated only between the incision line and the navel. This skin flap is stretched down, the excess is removed, and the flap is stitched back into place. The scar is similar to a caesarean and recovery is quicker than for full abdominoplasty.

The length of your operation depends on the procedure. A Full Tummy Tuck usually takes two to five hours whilst a Mini Tummy Tuck may take an hour or two.

Risk Factors

There will be visible scarring with a tummy tuck, however much of the scarring can be kept within the boundaries of undergarments or swimwear. Scars may begin to fade and flatten from three months to two years on (poor healing and wider scarring is more common in smokers).

Temporary numbness and bruising of abdominal skin is to be expected.

As with any surgical procedure, although uncommon, excessive bleeding or infection following surgery may cause swelling and pain. Whilst the majority of patients do not experience complications you should discuss with your doctor any concerns you have in this regard.

Planning Your Surgery

In your initial consultation the doctor will evaluate your health and discuss with you the pros and cons of the surgery. The doctor will explain the surgical technique most appropriate for you. You will be shown photos of patients who have had similar surgery and the results which they have achieved from their procedure.

Sometimes the overall result of a tummy tuck can be improved with liposuction used in conjunction with this surgery, either in the incision area or around the hips and "love handles". Other procedures such as a buttock lift may be performed concurrently to effectively create a combined "body lift".

The procedure will vary according to each patient's unique requirements. When this surgery is medically indicated Medicare and/or private health insurance will contribute to the cost.

Post-Operative Care

For the first few days, your abdomen will probably be swollen and you're likely to feel some pain and discomfort. We will ensure that you have adequate pain medication, and you will be monitored very closely and seen regularly to ensure maximum comfort.

Following abdominoplasty you will have dressings covering your wound which will restrict your ability to shower in the first week. During this period you are limited to a sponge bath. You will be



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required to wear an abdominal binder garment for four weeks following surgery. From week two you will be allowed to shower.

It is also important that, although you may not be able to stand straight at first, you start walking as soon as possible help to reduce swelling, lower the chance of blood clots, and maintain muscle tone. You're not to lift heavy objects, strain, bend or overdo things during your recovery. It is recommended that patients take two weeks off work after the surgery. If your job involves any form of lifting, bending or exertion, the time will increase. If you take longer to heal provision needs to be made for additional time off. While some people return to work after two weeks, others may need take three or four weeks to rest and recuperate. You should avoid vigorous exercise for about six weeks.

You will be reassessed in our clinic 7 days after surgery when the umbilical sutures are removed. The remaining sutures will be removed 14 days after surgery (the deeper sutures will be reabsorbed). You will subsequently be seen at our clinic 6 weeks and 3 months after surgery.

There are a number of factors to consider with abdominoplasty surgery. This information will be explained to you during your consultation appointment. At Cosmetic Image Clinics we understand the issues involved in making such an important decision and we are happy to discuss your concerns at any time.