

ABDOMINOPLASTY

What is a tummy tuck?

A tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, removes excess fat and skin, and in most cases restores weakened or separated muscles creating an abdominal profile that is smoother and firmer.

A flat and well-toned abdomen is something many of us strive for through exercise and weight control. Sometimes these methods cannot achieve our goals.

Even individuals of otherwise normal body weight and proportion can develop an abdomen that protrudes or is loose and sagging. The most common causes of this include:

- Pregnancy
- Aging
- Significant fluctuations in weight
- Heredity
- Prior surgery

What a tummy tuck won't do:

Tummy tucks are not a substitute for weight loss or an appropriate exercise program. Also, tummy tuck operations cannot correct stretch marks, although these may be removed or somewhat improved if they are located on the areas of excess skin that will be excised, generally the treated areas below the belly button. .

Tummy tuck candidates

Abdominoplasty is a good option for you if:

- You are physically healthy and at a stable weight
- You have realistic expectations
- You do not smoke

Although the results of an abdominoplasty procedure are technically permanent, the positive outcome can be greatly diminished by significant fluctuations in your weight. For this reason, individuals who are planning substantial weight loss or women who may be considering future pregnancies may be advised to postpone abdominoplasty surgery.

Tummy tuck surgery is a highly individualized procedure and you should do it for yourself, not to fulfill someone else's desires or to try to fit any sort of ideal image.

Tummy tuck risks and safety information

The decision to have tummy tuck surgery is extremely personal and you'll have to decide if the benefits will achieve your goals and if the risks and potential abdominoplasty complications are acceptable.

Your plastic surgeon and/or staff will explain in detail potential tummy tuck complications. You will be asked to sign consent forms to ensure that you fully understand the procedure you will undergo and any risks or potential complications.

Possible abdominoplasty risks include:

- Unfavorable scarring
- Bleeding (hematoma)
- Infection
- Fluid accumulation
- Poor wound healing
- Skin loss

- Blood clots
- Numbness or other changes in skin sensation
- Anesthesia risks
- Skin discoloration and/or prolonged swelling
- Fatty tissue found deep in the skin might die (fat necrosis)
- Major wound separation
- Asymmetry
- Recurrent looseness of skin
- Pain, which may persist
- Deep vein thrombosis, cardiac and pulmonary complications
- Persistent swelling in the legs
- Nerve damage
- Possibility of revisional surgery
- Suboptimal aesthetic result

You'll need help

If your abdominoplasty is performed on an outpatient basis, be sure to arrange for someone to drive you to and from surgery and to stay with you for at least the first night following surgery.

Tummy tuck recovery

Following your surgery, dressings or bandages may be applied to your incisions, and you may be wrapped in an elastic bandage or a compression garment to minimize swelling and to support your abdomen as it heals.

A small, thin tube may be temporarily placed under the skin to drain any excess blood or fluid that may collect to minimize swelling after tummy tuck surgery.

You will be given specific instructions to aid your recovery from tummy tuck surgery: how to care for the surgical site and drains, medications to apply or take orally to aid healing and reduce the potential for infection, specific concerns to look for at the surgical site or in your general health, and when to follow-up with your plastic surgeon.

Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon specific questions about what you can expect during your individual abdominoplasty recovery period.

- Where will I be taken after my surgery is complete?
- What medication will I be given or prescribed after surgery?
- Will I have dressings/bandages after surgery? When will they be removed?
- Are stitches removed? When?
- When can I resume normal activity and exercise?
- When do I return for follow-up care?

Previous abdominal surgery may limit the potential results of a tummy tuck. In women who have undergone cesarean section, the existing scars may often be incorporated into the new scar.

Your abdominoplasty procedure will result in a flatter, firmer abdominal contour that is more proportionate with your body type and weight.

The final results may be initially obscured by swelling and your inability to stand fully upright until internal healing is complete.

Within a week or two, you should be standing tall and confident about your new slimmer profile.