

Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)

This handout is about abdominoplasty, a procedure better known as a “tummy tuck.” Please take a few minutes to review it before you meet your plastic surgeon. You can discuss your options with your doctor and decide what procedure(s) might be right for you.

About This Procedure

This is a very common procedure. Extra skin and fat in the belly are removed. Most often a long incision (cut) is made in the lower belly. The scar is usually hidden by swimming suits or underwear. There is another incision around the belly button.

The abdominal (belly) muscles are tightened during surgery. This improves the shape of the belly, improves posture, and might decrease back pain and stress incontinence. Liposuction is often done at the same time. This should provide a more athletic yet natural look to the belly.

Options for Surgery

Based on your goals and body, you might choose one or more of these procedures.

- **Tummy tuck (abdominoplasty):** This is described above.
- **Tummy tuck with liposuction:** This includes the traditional tummy tuck combined with liposuction of the waist and lower back. This is very common and many patients are candidates for it. It improves the waistline and the shape of the lower back. The scar is the same as the traditional tummy tuck.
- **Circumferential (circular) tummy tuck:** This is also known as a “lower body lift.” This is similar to the traditional tummy tuck but the scar extends around the waist and back.

The scar is usually still hidden by the underwear or swimming suit. This tightens the skin in the waist and lower back and can lift the buttock.

- **Buttock lift / augmentation:** This can be done with any of the above procedures. This is done to change the look of the buttock (making it tighter, larger, or changing its shape).
- **Liposuction only:** This is done for patients with minimal skin laxity who want less fat under the skin and spares the need for the long tummy tuck scars.

Day of Surgery

Markings are made on your belly while you are awake and standing. Please wear your usual or favorite style of swimming suit (or underwear). This helps us draw the incision to be as hidden as possible.

Recovery

Recovery varies for each person. We do everything we can to get you back to most activities as quickly as possible. People need pain medicines for a few days or up to a few weeks. No heavy lifting or exercise is allowed for 10 days. You will then slowly increase your exercise tolerance. You can expect to go back to all activities in 6 weeks. Most patients take 2 weeks off work.

The scar will improve slowly over several months. You will have some numbness in the lower abdomen. This will get better slowly but will not completely resolve. You will have bruising and sweating in the pubic area. You will have 1-2 drains that might stay in for up to 2 weeks.

Other Procedures

It is very common for patients to have other procedures during this surgery. This might include breast surgery, liposuction, and laser peels.

Fat Transfer (Fat Grafting)

Since most tummy tucks involve some liposuction, we can often transfer fat to another body part. This includes fat transfer to the breast, face, hands and buttocks. We can also transfer fat to belly muscles for a more sculpted look. This has become a common option in the last few years.

Risks

For tummy tucks, risks include but are not limited to:

- Cosmetic concerns, such as scar widening and asymmetry.
- Permanent loss of sensation in the lower belly.
- Wound healing delays. These are usually minor and heal within a few weeks. Major wound healing problems that take longer to heal are uncommon.
- Seroma (collection of clear fluid at the surgical site).
- Complications of anesthesia.
- Injury to bowel.
- Bleeding.
- Medicine allergy.
- Blood clots in veins of legs and lungs.
- Chest infection.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 11/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8169.