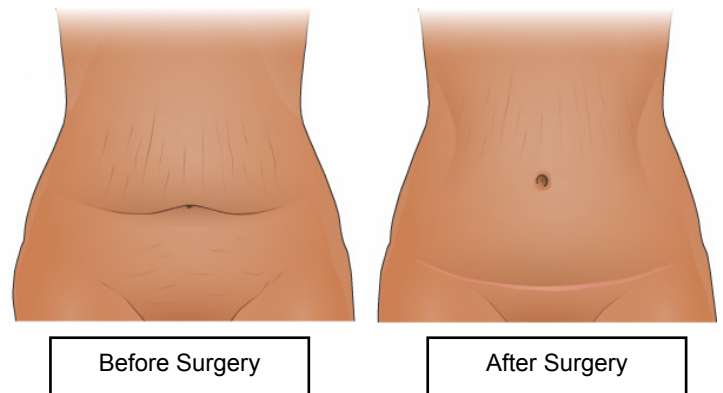


Tummy Tuck - Abdominoplasty

Introduction

Abdominoplasty is also known as a tummy tuck or abdomen reduction. It is a surgical procedure to remove loose skin and fat. This is done to tighten and flatten the abdomen. You should have realistic expectations about what cosmetic surgery can do for you. You should also understand the possible risks and complications.

This reference summary explains abdominoplasty. It discusses what to expect before, during and after the procedure.



Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery

A tummy tuck is a type of cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery changes the appearance of your body parts. These body parts function normally but do not look the way you want. The decision to have cosmetic surgery is reached by you and your cosmetic surgeon together. He or she can recommend if cosmetic surgery will be safe and effective for you.

You should have realistic expectations about what cosmetic surgery can do for you. You should also understand the possible risks and complications.

Cosmetic surgery is not covered by most health insurance plans. The cost of the procedure and follow-up care varies.



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Tummy Tuck

The abdominal muscles and connective tissue surrounding the abdomen hold your internal organs in place. They are also responsible for the look of your abdomen.

A flabby abdomen can be caused by:

- Aging.
- Excess skin or fat.
- Poor elasticity of the skin.
- Stretching of the inner tissue and abdominal muscles.

Your abdomen may sag or swell after pregnancy or after significant changes in your weight.

A tummy tuck can remove loose skin and tighten the abdominal muscles. A tummy tuck can also remove stretch marks below the belly button. You may consider a tummy tuck if:

- You have excess skin around your belly button.
- You have a weak lower abdominal wall.

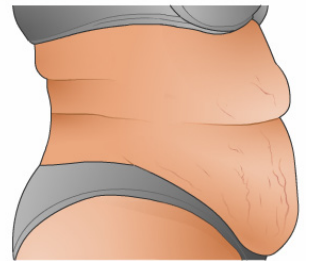
A tummy tuck may not be right for you. Your health care provider may not recommend it if:

- You may want to become pregnant in the future.
- You have a body mass index that is greater than 40.

Body mass index, or BMI, is a measurement of body weight in relation to height. It is used to measure total body fat and to determine whether a person is at a healthy weight.

A tummy tuck may not be right for you if you have certain medical conditions, such as:

- Diabetes.
- Heart disease.
- Irritable bowel syndrome.



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Irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS, is a common problem that affects the large intestine. It can cause abdominal cramping, bloating and a change in bowel habits. Significant weight loss after a tummy tuck can result in even more excess skin. If you are planning to lose weight, you should do so before the surgery.

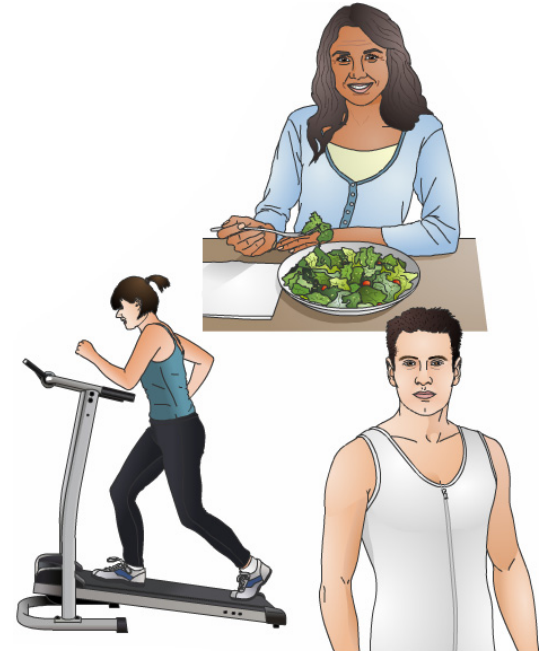
Alternative Treatments

You may be able to improve the look of your abdomen without surgery. Alternative treatments include:

- Eating a low-fat, healthy diet.
- Exercising regularly.
- Wearing shaping garments.

If diet and exercise do not improve the look of your abdomen, your plastic surgeon may recommend a tummy tuck.

If you have poor body image, talking to a counselor may help you increase your self esteem.



Before the Procedure

Before a tummy tuck, tell your health care provider about any medications you are currently taking. You may need to avoid certain drugs. Before your tummy tuck, you may need to begin taking an anticoagulant. This medication prevents blood clotting.

You need to maintain a stable weight for at least 3 months before a tummy tuck. Significant changes in weight can affect the surgery's results. If you smoke, you will also need to quit before the surgery. Smoking affects healing and can cause tissue death.

Make plans for someone to drive you home after you leave the health care facility. A loved one or friend should stay with you for at least the first night of your recovery.



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During the Procedure

A tummy tuck typically takes about three hours. It is likely that you will be able to go home the same day as the surgery. A tummy tuck is done under general anesthesia. You will receive an anesthetic through an IV line or by inhaling it. It will affect the entire body. You will be asleep during the surgery. You will not feel any pain. IV stands for intravenous. An IV line gives a drug or other substance through a needle or tube inserted into a vein.



During a tummy tuck, the skin and fat between the belly button and pubic hair are surgically taken out. The muscles in the abdomen will then be tightened with permanent sutures. Permanent sutures are strong stitches that are used to hold muscle or tissue in place. They will not dissolve. The incision will leave a scar along the natural crease of the bikini line. During a tummy tuck, your belly button will be moved or changed. It will be remade by your surgeon with a small incision.

Risks and Complications

A tummy tuck is safe. But there are possible risks and complications. You need to know about them just in case they happen. By being informed, you may be able to help your health care provider detect complications early.

All surgeries carry the risk of infection or a reaction to anesthesia. Anesthesia is safe. But, like any medicine, it can have risks.

Risks of anesthesia include:

- Breathing problems.
- Chipped teeth or cut lips.
- Headache.

Risks of anesthesia also include:

- Nausea.
- Sore throat.
- Vomiting.
- Urinary retention.



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More serious risks and complications of anesthesia can include:

- Temporary mental confusion.
- Lung infections.
- Stroke.
- Heart attack.
- Death.

Your anesthesiologist will talk to you before your surgery about these risks. He or she will ask about any medicines you are currently taking. Blood clots in the legs can happen due to inactivity after the surgery. These usually show up a few days after surgery. They cause the leg to swell and hurt. Blood clots can become dislodged from the leg and go to the lungs. There, they will cause shortness of breath, chest pain and possibly death.



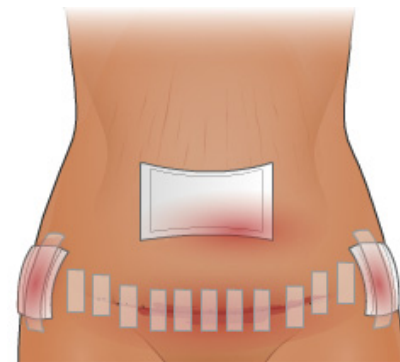
Let your health care provider know right away if you experience symptoms of a blood clot. Sometimes, the shortness of breath can happen without warning. Getting out of bed shortly after surgery may help decrease the risk of this complication.

Risks of the tummy tuck procedure include:

- Bleeding that happens during or after surgery.
- Infection.
- Numbness or changes in skin sensation.

Risks of the tummy tuck procedure also include:

- Poor wound healing.
- Scarring.
- Seroma, the buildup of fluid beneath the skin.
- Tissue death.



During a tummy tuck, fatty tissue deep within your skin may be harmed. It may die. Smoking increases the chance of tissue death. Tissue death may result in the wound opening up and the need for additional surgeries.

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After the Procedure

Your abdomen, incision and belly button will be covered with a surgical dressing after your tummy tuck. Small tubes may be placed along the incision site. The tubes will drain any excess blood or fluid. They may remain in your body for a week or two. Your health care provider will show you how to empty and care for your drains.

You will need to keep your upper body slightly raised when you lay down for the first few days after surgery. After a tummy tuck, it is likely that you will feel moderate pain. This can be controlled with medication. You may also need to take an antibiotic and anticoagulant. Swelling in the surgical area is normal for about six weeks. In some cases, swelling may last for up to three months.

You will wear a supportive garment, called an abdominal binder, for four to six weeks after surgery. This helps prevent fluid buildup. It also provides abdominal support during healing.

For the first three months after a tummy tuck, be careful when you move. Avoid positions that strain your wound, such as bending at the waist. This is to prevent the re-opening of the incision line. Contact your health care provider right away if you experience any severe pain or bleeding.

Most people are happy with the results of their tummy tuck, which usually last for a long time. You will need to meet with your health care provider for follow up care, as well as instructions on how to maintain your results.



Summary

Abdominoplasty is also known as a tummy tuck or abdomen reduction. It is a surgical procedure to remove loose, excess skin and fat. This is done to tighten and flatten the abdomen. During a tummy tuck, the skin and fat between the belly button and pubic hair are surgically taken out. The muscles in the abdomen will then be tightened with permanent sutures. The incision will leave a scar that falls along the natural crease of the bikini line.

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A tummy tuck is safe. But there are possible risks and complications. You need to know about them just in case they happen. By being informed, you may be able to help your health care provider detect complications early. After a tummy tuck, it is likely that you will feel moderate pain. This can be controlled with medication. You may also need to take an antibiotic and anticoagulant.

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