

# Abdominoplasty or Tummy Tuck

## Faeza Kazmier, M.D.

Abdominoplasty is more commonly as a "tummy tuck." It is a surgical procedure to remove excess skin and fat from the middle and lower abdomen and to tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall. The procedure can dramatically reduce the appearance of a protruding abdomen. In general, in order to remove enough skin to achieve a satisfying result, a scar is needed that usually extends from hip to hip.



If you're considering abdominoplasty, this section is designed to give you a basic understanding of the procedure-when it can help, how it's performed, and what results you can expect. It can't answer all of your questions, since a lot depends on the individual patient. During your consultation, I will be better able to provide you with more specific information based on your exam.

The best candidates for abdominoplasty are men or women who are in relatively good shape but are bothered by a large fat deposit or loose abdominal skin that won't respond to diet or exercise. The surgery is particularly helpful to women who, through multiple pregnancies, have stretched their abdominal muscles and skin beyond the point where they can return to normal. Loss of skin elasticity in older patients, which frequently occurs with slight obesity, can also be improved.

Patients who intend to lose a lot of weight should postpone the surgery. Also, women who plan future pregnancies should wait, as the muscles in the abdomen that are tightened during surgery can separate again during pregnancy.

Abdominoplasty can enhance your appearance and your self-confidence, but it won't necessarily change your looks to match your ideal, or cause other people to treat you differently. Before you decide to have surgery, think carefully about your expectations and discuss them with me.

During your consultation, we will discuss your health, determine the extent of fat deposits in your abdominal region and assess your skin tone. In some cases, I advise patients to pursue a mini-abdominoplasty or liposuction alone, depending on his or her exam.

I pay particular attention to detail to ensuring as low and as short of a scar as possible to maximize your ability to fit in a wide variety of clothing. Of particular importance is the care I take in creating your belly button, or umbilicus. An umbilical closure that is done without care to creating as attractive a navel as possible can significantly detract from this surgery.

### Getting Back to Normal

It may take you weeks or months to feel like your old self again. If you start out in top physical condition with strong abdominal muscles, recovery from abdominoplasty will be much faster. Some people return to work after two weeks, while others take three or four weeks to rest and recuperate.

Exercise will help you heal better. Even people who have never exercised before should begin an exercise program to reduce swelling, lower the chance of blood clots, and tone muscles. Vigorous exercise, however, should be avoided until you can do it comfortably which is usually at 6 weeks after surgery.

Your scars may actually appear to worsen during the first three to six months as they heal, but this is normal. Expect it to take nine months to a year before your scars flatten out and lighten in color. While they'll never disappear completely, abdominal scars will not show under most clothing, even under bathing suits.

### Your New Look

Abdominoplasty, whether partial or complete, produces excellent results for patients with weakened abdominal muscles or excess skin. And in most cases, the results are long lasting, if you follow a balanced diet and exercise regularly.

If you're realistic in your expectations and prepared for the consequences of a permanent scar and a lengthy recovery period, abdominoplasty may be just the answer for you.