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ABDOMINOPLASTY

Abdominoplasty or tummy tuck operations are done to remove prominent unwanted abdominal bulges, excess skin and unsightly scars. Abdominoplasty procedures vary from liposuction of prominent abdominal fat collections, lower/mini tummy tuck to a full tummy tuck in order to remove excess fat and skin and repair the stretched, lax abdominal wall.

WHICH OPERATION IS BEST FOR ME?

The operation best suited for each patient is decided on at the time of consultation once the tummy has been examined. Younger patients who have never been pregnant tend to require lesser procedures like liposuction whereas women who has had a number of pregnancies or has pre-existing abdominal scars and a lax abdominal wall, tend to need full tummy tucks to remove excess tissue and repair the muscle layer. Full tummy tucks are advised after the childbearing years, once one's family is complete and permanent precautions have been taken to prevent further pregnancies.

WHAT DOES A TUMMY TUCK INVOLVE?

Abdominal liposuction will remove unwanted fat collections without making large incisions on the tummy skin. A full tummy tuck involves repair of the lax and stretched muscle layers in conjunction with removal of excess skin and careful placement of scars to restore a youthful, athletic appearance to the abdomen. Many patients have unsightly lower abdominal scars or rolls that can be removed whilst doing the tummy tuck. Strategic liposuction will enhance the result further.

Some patients only need repair of a lower tummy prominence, below the belly button, in which case a lower tummy tuck can be done with shorter hospital stay and quicker **recovery**.

BEFORE THE OPERATION

Patients are advised to attain their goal weight before the operation is performed in order to obtain the best possible result and to lessen the risk of complications after surgery. Smoking increases the risk of complications significantly and no smoking is advised for 3 months prior to tummy tuck. Patients should not take blood thinning agents like Arnica or Disprin for 1 week prior to this operation.

DAY OF OPERATION

You are admitted to hospital early on the day of the operation to be seen by your anaesthetist. Preoperative photos are taken and the tummy is marked beforehand. The operations are mostly done under general anaesthetic and lasts 60 min for liposuction, 90 min for a lower tummy tuck and 150 min for a full tummy tuck.

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AFTER THE OPERATION

Hospital stay varies from 1 to 3 days depending on the extent of the surgery and patient logistics. Lower tummy tuck operations can sometimes be done as day cases under conscious sedation. Full tummy tucks are relatively painful operations but adequate pain medication will be provided. Most patients have drains in place which will be removed between 1 and 3 days after the operation. Supportive garments are worn for 6 weeks afterwards for the sake of comfort and to counter excessive swelling. Scars are taped for 6 months to help with maturation into less visible pale scars. Scars take at least a year to fully mature. Tummy tucks leave scars that are permanent but easily hidden in swimwear or underwear and a small area of numbness will be present of the tummy skin between the scar and the belly button.

Patients recover from surgery to careful daily activity within 3 days after liposuction alone, 7-10 days after lower tummy tuck and 14 days after full tummy tuck. It will be 6 weeks before vigorous activity or sport can be attempted.

COMPLICATIONS

Complications of surgery include postoperative bleeding, wound infection, tissue fluid collections under the skin, unsightly or irregular scars, remaining skin laxity, loss of skin above the scar, deep venous thrombosis and lung complications following anaesthetic.

Specific precautions are taken to prevent complications as far as possible at the time of surgery. All complications are treatable but may require prolonged hospitalisation, further operations and further expense not budgeted for. Minor scar revision is occasionally required, usually under local anaesthetic in the rooms surgery. Dark skinned patients are more prone to hypertrophic scars and hyper pigmentation of their skin after surgery.

THE GOOD NEWS

Tummy tuck operations produce excellent results for patients with prominent tummies, excessively lax skin and unsightly lower abdominal scars. The results can be enhanced further if weight is maintained, a balanced diet is followed with regular exercise to tone the abdominal muscles. These operations are unlikely to have to be redone again in future. Tummy tucks are regularly recommended to others and patients are usually highly satisfied and delighted with their flat tummies.

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