

Abdominoplasty

Patient Care Instructions

General Information

An abdominoplasty or “tummy tuck” removes excess fat and skin while tightening the abdominal wall. This procedure is best done after a woman is no longer going to have children, as pregnancy can re-stretch the abdominal muscles. Tumescant liposuction of the flanks is done in conjunction with the tummy tuck to achieve optimal cosmetic results. Liposuction with tumescant fluid contains epinephrine to decrease the risk of bleeding and bruising, and lidocaine to decrease the amount of anesthesia required during surgery. The lidocaine also provides pain relief after surgery.

Pre-Operative Guidelines

Smoking should be stopped a minimum of 6 weeks prior to surgery. Smoking should be avoided for at least 6 weeks after surgery as well. Smoking can greatly interfere with healing and lead to postoperative complications.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery. This includes no water, gum or hard candy. Blood pressure and/or heart medications can be taken with a sip of water as directed by your prescribing physician.

If you take medication for diabetes, then confirm with your prescribing physician how to manage these medications prior to surgery.

If you are prone to nausea or motion sickness let your anesthesiologist know on the day of surgery. Medications can be started prior to surgery or during surgery to help improve your postoperative experience.

Post-Operative Instructions

Take pain medications and muscle relaxants as directed. Do not drink alcohol with these medications.

Do not take pain medicines on an empty stomach.

You may resume all your home medicines as you normally take them.

Do not use a heating pad; heat may burn the area.

Take a stool softener/laxative, such as Colace, Biscodyl, or Milk of Magnesia, until bowels begin to function normally after surgery. A combination of anesthesia and pain medication usually makes this necessary for a few days.

Do not smoke or be around smoking as even secondhand smoke delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

You may resume a normal diet after surgery. Do follow a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.

Activity Restrictions

Walking is encouraged soon after your operation and can be increased over the first couple of weeks. You may ambulate as much as tolerated.

Light cardiovascular exercise can be resumed after 4 weeks and all other activities at 6 weeks.

Please refrain from any strenuous activity. Absolutely no jogging, swimming, or lifting anything more than 10 lb for 6 weeks.

You will need to walk slightly bent at the hips for about a week. This will reduce the tension on the lower abdominal incision. This helps protect the incision as it heals and improves the scar long term. Sleeping in a recliner or a wedge pillow or pillows behind the knees will help make this position more tolerable.

Incision Care

You will have skin glue over your abdominal incision after surgery that is waterproof. You will additionally have drain tubes covered with a plastic dressing. The plastic dressing can be changed if needed. Aquaguard waterproof dressings can be purchased over the counter and are good dressings to replace them with. The glue will start to lift over time, you may peel it off or use a pair of clean scissors to cut any glue that has lifted off the skin. Do not peel the glue unless it has started to lift from the skin.

You can shower 3 days after surgery. Make sure you have someone with you at your first shower. **Do not bathe or soak in a tub for at least 4 weeks.** You may cleanse the incisions, but please keep the drain sites dry. You may re-enforce the drain dressings with aquaguard over the counter dressings if needed.

Drains will remain in place until totals are 30 ml or less for 24 hours.

The belly button site should be cleansed daily with soap and water and cared for by placing a thin layer of bacitracin over the surgical site followed by gauze and tape. This should be changed daily.

You will be given a binder, wear it as much as possible for 3-4 weeks after your operation. Take it off only to shower.

Post-Operative Expectations

Swelling of the abdomen is expected and some women express a feeling of, “bloat” that will subside around 6-9 weeks.

Discomfort of the abdomen and chest is common. Mild burning around the incisions after surgery is normal and will improve shortly after surgery.

You can expect some slight bloody oozing from the suture lines and swelling of the incisions. It is not uncommon for some saturation of the dressings to occur. Gauze may be applied if it is bothersome. However, you should call the clinic if you have continuous bleeding, significantly more swelling or any severe pain associated with swelling.

Tightness of the abdomen is a normal feeling after this surgery. This may worsen over the first 2 days but will relax with time. Maintaining the flexed position and compression along with medication for spasms will help alleviate some of this.

Constipation is common after surgery in relation to anesthesia and pain medications. Stool softeners/laxatives, staying hydrated and ambulating will help bowels return to normal.

When to Call the Office

If you have increased swelling and bruising to the abdomen. Remove and clothing or dressing to make determination. This may represent a hematoma (a collection of blood) or a seroma (collection of clear fluid).

If you have swelling or redness around the incision.

If you have severe pain not relieved by pain medication.

If you have any side effects from medication: rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.

If you have fever over 101.

If you have yellow or green drainage from an incision or notice foul odor.

If you notice some vaginal burning and itching as a result of the antibiotics used during and after surgery.

For medical questions please call 817-702-9100.

Follow-up Care and Appointments

You will be seen approximately 1 week after your surgery. If for some reason you do not have an appointment scheduled, please call 817-702-9100.