



GOLD COAST

**Plastic Surgery**



Your comprehensive guide to

# TUMMY TUCK

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# Tummy Tuck (abdominoplasty)

A tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, is a surgical procedure that removes excess fat and skin from the stomach area. It will also tighten weakened and loose abdominal muscles to give the stomach a flatter, firmer appearance.

During the procedure, an incision is made in the lower abdominal region, allowing your surgeon to access and repair the muscles that comprise the abdominal wall and remove excess fat, tissue, and skin. Depending on the individual patient, a second, higher incision may be made near the navel to excise fat and skin in the upper portion of the stomach. Liposuction may be used to remove excess fat during a tummy tuck.

## **Tummy Tuck Considerations:**

During the first consultation, you will be asked about the desired results you are looking to achieve. If you plan to get pregnant or lose weight, discuss this with your surgeon. Abdominoplasty is designed primarily for patients who are mostly satisfied with their weight, but who have excess skin and loose muscle around their midsections.

Abdominoplasty is not a substitute for weight loss or exercise. It may be possible to achieve a flatter stomach without surgery, through healthy eating and exercise, but not always. We recommend that abdominoplasty be considered only after dieting and exercise have achieved the right body shape underneath.

## **Am I a candidate for a tummy tuck?**

The following conditions could indicate that a tummy tuck is right for you:

- Tightening excess skin to eliminate loose and sagging skin
- Tightening the underlying abdominal muscles to create a firmer abdominal wall
- Removing excess fat to eliminate a protruding tummy
- Maintaining a stable weight, with no plans for future pregnancies

## **What to expect**

A Tummy tuck may be performed on an outpatient basis. If this is the case, be sure to arrange for someone to drive you home after surgery and to stay with you for at least the next day or two. You may be permitted to go home after a few hours unless you and your surgeon have determined that you will stay in the hospital or surgical facility overnight. Medications are administered for your comfort during the surgical procedure. Often, a general anaesthetic is administered so that you will be asleep throughout the procedure. A tummy tuck may be performed using local anaesthesia and intravenous sedation.



## Abdominoplasty operation

There are two types of abdominoplasty:

- Full abdominoplasty – this removes excess skin and tightens underlying muscles across the whole abdominal area, including around the navel.
- Partial abdominoplasty – this removes excess skin below the navel and tightens the lower abdominal muscles only.

The operation is usually performed under general anaesthetic. The length of the operation will depend on the extent of the surgery, but it could take up to three hours.

A full abdominoplasty involves:

- The surgeon makes a horizontal, curved incision (cut) near the pubic hairline, which runs from one hip to the other
- Skin and fatty tissue are lifted from the underlying tissue
- Stitch and tighten slack or separated abdominal muscles
- Excess fat is removed
- Surplus skin is trimmed
- The navel is repositioned
- The wounds are closed with stitches, tape or clips.

## What does a partial abdominoplasty include?

### Recovery

When surgery is completed, you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored and will most likely stay in hospital overnight unless otherwise informed.

This is what the recovery process may look like:

- Small drain tubes will have been placed within the abdominal tissues to help avoid an accumulation of fluids. These drains will likely stay in for the first 7 days after surgery. Our nurses will call you daily to record the amount that has drained from your body.
- A small tube will have been placed within the abdominal tissues which are connected to a plastic bottle containing local anaesthetic which is slowly infused into the tissues to decrease pain. This is called a “pain pump” and normally works for the first 3-7 days following the surgery.
- Your incision will most likely run from hip to hip and there will be internal sutures that will dissolve in up to 6 months post-op. The incision will be covered by Prineo Tape (clear, waterproof skin closure system) over the suture line with a large dressing tape covering your abdomen, and a tight abdominal binder. The tape will remain for 3 weeks whilst the outer dressing may be removed before leaving the hospital.

Expect your abdomen to have some pain and discomfort. Some may find numbness in the area. If pain persists, please contact your anaesthetist to discuss this further.

- You will be encouraged to go for short walks to promote blood circulation and the risk of blood clotting.
- It is advised that you try not to sit for long periods of time during the first several days and avoid straining, bending and lifting.
- Dr. Mark Doyle surgeon will instruct you to sleep on your back with a pillow under your knees.

### After the surgery

- within a week of surgery, any surgical drains will probably be removed. You may be instructed to wear a support garment 23 hrs per day for 6 weeks depending on where the incisions were made. Stitches will be removed in stages over a period of one to two weeks. Bruising and some of the swelling will occur and disappear over a period of weeks.
- Approximately 10 days after surgery you will be reviewed by our nurse and during the visit, the sutures will be removed from your bellybutton site and your Prineo Tape will be checked
- Approximately 3 weeks after surgery you will be again reviewed by one of our nurses and your Prineo Tape will be removed. During this visit, you will be shown how to apply Fixomull to your wounds to ensure proper care for your healing journey.
- It is recommended that every 4-5 days the Fixomull is removed in the shower and the area is gently dried. Inspect the area for infection and apply a new stripe of Fixomull. Repeat until you are 6 weeks post operation.
- 6 weeks after the surgery you may commence using a topical scar treatment such as vitamin E or silicone gel. Your scars will be reddened for about 12 months after surgery, and then it should start to fade and soften. Please avoid direct sunlight on the scarring areas and wear sunscreen when in the sun.
- You will be seen by Dr. Mark Doyle approximately 6 to 8 weeks post-surgery and will have further review appointments if required. During this time you will have postoperative photos taken for your medical records.

## Swelling

The swelling may take months to subside before you will see the final results of your tummy tuck.

## Scarring

Even though the incisions from the procedure will heal and fade over time, it's important to know that the incision lines will be permanently visible.

Fortunately, most bathing suits and undergarments usually conceal the incisions of your tummy tuck.

## Returning to normal activities

You may be able to resume most of your normal activities anywhere from one to six weeks after surgery depending on the extent of the surgery and your occupation. Some mild, periodic discomfort may occur, however, if you experience any severe pains, they should be reported to your doctor.

## Common Questions

### How long after surgery until I can drive again?

You are not allowed to drive for 3 weeks after your procedure. This is due to the decreased movement in your abdominal area and the inability to move freely. After 3 weeks if you can move and react without pain and are no longer on any pain medication you may recommence driving. Please check with your insurance as each policy can be different and it is a general rule of thumb that you will not be covered for 6 weeks after surgery as you are not able to react or move in a safe manner.

### When can I return to daily activities?

Start walking as soon as possible to help reduce the swelling and lower the risk of blood clots. Sexual activity should be avoided for a minimum of 2 weeks. Light exercise may commence 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.

### Will I need to stop smoking before a breast reduction?

It is recommended that you completely stop smoking at least 6 weeks before surgery. This is to ensure that the body can heal to the best of its ability as smoking decreases the oxygen that is carried throughout your blood to help your skin heal from a surgical incision.

### What can I do to minimise any scarring?

Any surgery procedure that involves an incision will result in a scar. However, after 6 weeks post-surgery you may commence using a topical scar treatment such as vitamin E or silicone gel. Your scars will be reddened for about 12 months after surgery, and then it should start to fade and soften. Please avoid direct sunlight on the scarring areas and wear sunscreen when in the sun.

## How do I sleep after surgery?

It is recommended to reduce the swelling after surgery to sleep with your knees slightly bent for as long as swelling persists. This will also help reduce the tension to your wound.

## When can I exercise again?

Most patients may resume light exercise after 3 to 4 weeks. It is recommended that strenuous exercise is restricted for 6 weeks as it may increase swelling, bleeding or duration to the body's natural healing process. These activities include weight lifting, sit-ups and running.

## When will I be able to go swimming again?

It is recommended that no ocean or pool swims occur before 6 weeks of surgery due to infection, as your wounds are not completely healed.

## Risks

Each year thousands of women and men undergo successful tummy tuck (abdominoplasty) procedures, experience no major problems and are happy with the results. Significant complications from a tummy tuck are infrequent. However, make sure you understand what surgery involves, including possible risks, complications and follow-up care. A tummy tuck poses various risks, including:

- Pain, swelling, and bruising during the first few weeks after surgery
- Visible scarring at the points of incision
- Excess scarring
- Uneven contours may occur in spite of efforts to balance skin and fat removal
- Rippling of the skin
- Fluid accumulation beneath the skin
- Skin loss
- Changes in skin sensation
- Nerve damage.

Like any major surgery, a tummy tuck poses a risk of bleeding, infection and an adverse reaction to anaesthesia. It's also possible to have an allergic reaction to the surgical tape or other materials used during or after the procedure. You can help minimise certain risks by following the advice and instructions of your surgeon, both before and after your tummy tuck surgery. If you have any concerns about the risks involved with tummy tuck surgery, please consult Dr. Mark Doyle and the team at Gold Coast Plastic Surgery.

## What are your next steps?

Schedule a confidential consultation with Dr. Mark Doyle by phone or in person. Send us an email to [enquiries@goldcoastplasticsurgery.com.au](mailto:enquiries@goldcoastplasticsurgery.com.au) or phone us on (07)5598 0988 to book.





## Contact Us

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