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Brachioplasty Information Sheet

After Surgery

When surgery is completed, you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored. You will have a compression garment, especially if you have lipo suction as well, which you will have to keep on for 3-6 weeks after surgery as instructed by your surgeon.

You will feel drowsy for several hours after the procedure and you will remember very little of this time.

How will I look and feel initially?

It is important to realize that the amount of time it takes for recovery varies greatly among individuals and also depends on the extent of the operation.

The stitches are hidden beneath the skin so that no sutures need to be removed following surgery.

You will notice swelling and bruising, which is to be expected. The bruising and much of the swelling will disappear over a period of weeks. However, it may be months before all swelling subsides and you see the final result of your arm lift. You may also notice some numbness over portions of the arm area, and this may persist for several months and sometimes can be permanent. Incisions will initially be red or pink in colour. They will remain this way for many months following surgery and may even appear to worsen before they finally begin to fade.

Some numbness around the suture line may persist for months after surgery. The arm skin may feel quite tight for some time but this feeling will gradually lessen and relax. This is due to strong stitches holding up the arm skin

When can I resume my normal activities?

You may be able to return to light work anywhere from one to three weeks after surgery. In many instances, you can resume most of your normal activities, including some form of mild exercise, after several weeks. You may continue to experience some mild, periodic discomfort and swelling during this time, but such feelings are normal. Severe pain should be reported to your doctor.

Results of your Surgery

Since the healing process is gradual, you should expect to wait at least several weeks to get an accurate picture of the results of your surgery. Incisions will fade over a number of months.

Unless you gain or lose a significant amount of weight or become pregnant, your arm should remain firmer and flatter for many years. However, gravity and the effects of ageing will eventually take their toll. If, after a period of years, you become dissatisfied

with the appearance of your arm, you may choose to undergo a second procedure to restore a more youthful arm contour.

Risks and possible complications of Surgery

Fortunately, significant complications from arm lift surgery are infrequent. Every year, many operations are performed with no major problems and good results. However, everyone considering surgery should be aware of both the benefits and risks. The subject of risks and potential complications of surgery is best discussed on a personal basis between you and your plastic surgeon. A number of measures will be in place to minimize the following risks:

- Bleeding may occur. At worst, this will require return to the operating theatre to evacuate the blood clot and to stop the bleeding.
- There will be bruising after surgery. This usually settles after approximately 2 weeks
- Wound infection may complicate the operation in approximately 5% of operations. The infection is usually treated with antibiotics, oral or intravenous, depending on its severity.
- Dehiscence or reopening of the wound may occur in about 1-5 percent of operations. This usually happens as a result of infection and is managed by treating the infection.
- Collection of blood or fluid under the operated skin. Because arm lift is usually an extensive operation, blood can collect under the repositioned arm skin. This usually happens within the first 24 hours after surgery. Rarely, it may require return to the operating theatre. More commonly, fluid collects under the skin without any obvious ill effects. Removal of this serum is a painless process but may require several visits to the dressing clinic.
- Skin loss in the highest extent of the repositioned arm skin occurs in approximately 2% of operations. This complication is more common in smokers and it is therefore very important that you stop smoking at least three weeks before surgery and not resume for 2 weeks after. Skin loss is also more common in medical conditions such as diabetes.
- Fat underneath the skin may not survive surgery and oily discharge may persist from the wounds for some weeks after surgery. If it becomes lumpy this is due to some fat necrosis which will resolve.
- Arm lift may result in long scars. Wide, lumpy or irregular scars may occur due to the tension on the tissues after surgery. Revisionary surgery is sometimes helpful in certain instances where incisions may have healed poorly. With liposuction as well there can be visible dimples to the skin.
- The scar, which is designed to lie in the creases along inner medial arm, may descend in to the lower part of the upper arm under the action of gravity. This means that the scar may, with time, no longer be hidden within creases and may be more
- There may be numbness in the upper part of your arm skin after surgery. This usually recovers with time, but can take several weeks.
- Blood clots in arm veins may cause arm swelling. The clots may travel to the lungs causing severe breathing difficulty and, rarely, death. With adequate precautions, which are routinely taken, including medications, compression stockings and early mobilization, these complications are uncommon.