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ABDOMINOPLASTY

Introduction

When I perform an abdominoplasty I want my patients to be comfortable with the decision to have surgery. Please read this information carefully and ask any questions you may have.

During your visit, I will try and show you before and after photos of patients who resemble you. We will give you a quote for your abdominoplasty surgery and information about financing options if desired. Can be obtained from the hospital. If at any time you have questions about this surgery, please do not hesitate to ask. You should feel comfortable discussing your goals and expectations with abdominoplasty

Abdominoplasty is a surgical procedure performed on the abdomen to remove excess skin and fat and tightening the muscles. In some women, pregnancy causes the skin and muscles of the abdomen to become loose. In men and women, cycles of weight gain and loss create a layer of loose excess skin and weak stretched-out abdominal muscles. Abdominoplasty can correct these conditions. Abdominoplasty is not a weight reduction procedure. Although the surgery removes some fat, the ideal candidate is at or near normal weight before surgery. Abdominoplasty is not a substitute for weight loss accompanied by a balanced moderate or low-fat diet and regular aerobic exercise. If you plan to have children, you should not have an abdominoplasty, as the entire abdomen will stretch with pregnancy. You should wait until you have finished having children.

Full abdominoplasty is suitable for patients requiring maximum correction. An incision is made low on the abdomen at the level of the pubic hair. The muscles of the abdomen are tightened with deep large stitches, and muscle weakness can then be strengthened with exercise after 12 weeks post-surgery. The umbilicus (belly button) stays in the same position on the abdominal wall, but a new opening in the skin is created for it. For patients requiring lesser correction, with a small fold above the pubis area, there is a more limited procedure with shorter incisions, mini-abdominoplasty. After examining you, I will tell you

whether full or mini-abdominoplasty will yield your desired result. Some patients seeking abdominoplasty also have liposuction, this can be discussed as well.

Preparing for Abdominoplasty—Starting Now Please read and familiarize yourself with this Abdominoplasty Patient Information sheet. By following all instructions carefully, you will assist in obtaining the best possible result from your abdominoplasty. If questions arise, do not hesitate to communicate with the hospital and discuss your questions at any time

Personal Information Sheet

- 1) **Instructions & Medical History** During the two-week period before your abdominoplasty please don't take aspirin, ibuprofen, non-steroidals or Vitamin E, and don't take any medications, vitamins, nutritional or herbal supplements. This includes Ginseng, garlic and oil of evening Primrose as these all stop your blood from clotting properly. It is very important to say whether you smoke as this operation carries a 70% risk of complications and this is too high for this operation to be carried out.
- 2) **The Morning of Your Surgery** Wash the tummy tuck surgery areas thoroughly. Do not apply any moisturizers, deodorant, talcum powder or other products afterwards. Do not use hairspray or perfume.
- 3) **Clothing** Wear simple, comfortable, loose-fitting, dark-colored clothing. Wear tops and bottoms that are easy to pull on As this will help after the surgery and with going over the abdominal binder.
- 4) **Immediately After Surgery Recovery Room** You will feel sleepy or groggy when you awake from anesthesia after your abdominoplasty and will be in bed with your legs bent to stop excess tension on your stitch line. It is best to reproduce this at home by having pillows to put under your knees so the legs are bent. The length of your stay primarily depends on your recovery and drains from the abdomen. The drains will stay in a maximum of 7 days but you will be home long before this to look after them at home. I expect a 1 or 2 night stay.
- 5) **After surgery.** You may experience difficulty standing up straight during the first week or so because your abdominal muscles and skin have been tightened. The most comfortable position for you may be sitting up or lying down with your knees bent and supported by one or two pillows. The least comfortable position is to lie flat on your back with your hips flat and your knees straight. Don't lie flat! Place the pillows under your thighs and behind your back, not under your head. The abdominal tightness will gradually disappear as you heal and move around.
- 6) **The complications.** The main is a return to the theatre if

you have *bleeding* under the abdominal skin. This is a *haematoma* and has to be removed. There is a 10% risk of this happening in large abdominoplasties. You will have antibiotics and have clean wounds but there is a risk of *infection* and this can lead to the wound opening up and localized *skin loss*. The area in the centre of the scar is the most at risk as this is under the most tension. There is a hip-to-hip *scar* and the healing of this will depend on your skin type and this can mean a lumpy scar (*hypertrophic*) or very lumpy excessive scar (*keloid*). The *scar and abdomen can be asymmetric* as sometimes the abdomen has different folds in it in the lower area and also fat distribution. The scar may have a rise in the middle to allow for the tension to be decreased in the skin closure. At the lateral edges of the scar there maybe small areas of fullness called “dog ears”. These usually settle on their own but may need removal later on under local anaesthetic. The belly button can have wound healing problems and is likely in 5% of cases. This will just need regular dressing and complete *loss of the umbilicus* is rare at 1%. *Numbness* is common and as described later is permanent in the triangle above the pubic area to the tummy button. There are deep large stitches in the muscles of the abdominal wall and if you run your finger down the centre of the abdomen these can sometimes be felt as small *ridges*. These can settle in time but some may still be felt. The later complication if fluid collecting under the abdominal skin called a *Seroma*. This can be removed using a syringe and needle if it becomes too large, they can also resolve on their own if small.

- 7) **Pain Control** You will have regular pain control medication, don't allow yourself to experience too much pain. If you feel significant pain increasing, ask for the pain medication before your pain is “out of control.”
- 8) **Medications** Take the antibiotics and pain medication prescribed. Don't take the pain medication on an empty stomach, as this will produce nausea and vomiting. You will be injected with a anti-clotting medication to help prevent clots forming in the legs called *deep vein thrombosis*. You will be required to wear compression stockings as well.
- 9) **What To Expect** Swelling of the abdomen is normal following your abdominoplasty. During the first week, your clothes may be tighter and you may weigh more than before because of retaining more fluid in your body. The swelling subsides in the second week after tummy tuck surgery, but some fullness persists in the lower abdomen. Expect to see about 50% contour improvement in 2 weeks, 75% at 1 month, and the remainder by 3 months after tummy tuck surgery. Occasional patients may see subtle continued improvement up to 6 months after abdominoplasty. Some areas of your abdomen will feel numb or have diminished sensation. Normal sensation will return gradually over

several months, but some diminished feeling may last indefinitely. The triangular area from the belly button to the top of the pubic area will be very numb permanently and it is important not to be aware of this and not to put a hot water bottle on this skin in case it causes a burn that you cannot feel. Full abdominoplasty patients will have a horizontal scar low on the abdomen (below the bikini line) and a circular scar within the umbilicus (belly button). In some patients a different type or location of scar may be necessary because of individual variations in anatomy.

- 10) **Hygiene** Full abdominoplasty patients may shower 48 hours after surgery,
- 11) **Dressings & Drain Care** At the time of your abdominoplasty I place a dressing over the incision line which is glued onto the skin and will naturally start to peel away after 12-14 days post-surgery. The glue can give a slight redness to the skin but this does not extend out of the dressing and if it does then may require antibiotics. Gauze dressings are put around the drains and an abdominal binder will be applied around the abdomen. The drains can be removed between 3-7 days after surgery. Drains evacuate the fluid that accumulates after tummy tuck surgery and enable you to heal faster. If you go home with the drains then you will be required to return to the hospital dressing clinic to have them assessed and emptied. They will remove the drains when the fluid begins to turn a clear straw color and/or the amount of drainage has diminished. Showering with the drains in place is okay as long as a clean dry dressing is put back on. There is still a risk of a seroma (fluid) collection under the abdominal skin even if the drains are kept in to the maximum. This can then be removed by needle aspiration in the dressing clinic
- 12) **Activity Restrictions** Most patients return to normal activities and to non-physical work 12 to 14 days after abdominoplasty. Strenuous physical activities, heavy lifting etc are prohibited for 6 weeks and core exercises for 10-12 weeks. You may sleep on your back or on your side, but don't sleep on your stomach for 4 weeks. Don't sit in the sun or heat for 4 weeks.
- 13) **Driving** For planning purposes, you can anticipate that you will not be able to drive for a couple of weeks, or at least until you are seen back in the dressing clinic which is at 12 days.
- 14) **Scars** Your scars after your abdominoplasty will be firm and pink for at least 8-12 weeks. There may also be a slight fullness to the upper part of the skin at the incision as this piece of tissue is thicker than the lower piece of tissue. This usually evens out over time. The scars may remain the same size for several months, or even appear to widen. After several months, your scars will begin to fade, although they will never disappear completely. You should use

sunscreen if you are in the sun in a bathing suit during the first year after your tummy tuck surgery.

- 15) Resuming Normal Activities /Work** Follow the plan we have agreed upon. For scheduling purposes, you can assume that you can return to a desk job and driving in 12-14 days.
- 16) Exercise** Avoid contact sports and other vigorous activity, including sexual activity, and core exercises for 8-10 weeks after abdominoplasty surgery. During this time, walking, cycling, swimming and use of the gym for general tone (not abdomen) is fine
- 17) Exposure To Sunlight** Scars take at least one year to fade to their greatest extent. During this time, it is advisable to protect them from the sun. Even through a bathing suit, sunlight can reach the skin and cause damage. Use a high SPF sunscreen.

Please read the above detailed patient information sheet and bring it with you for the operation. Please sign a copy and this will be put in your hospital notes as part of your fullyinformed consent for this operation.

Signed

Date