



TUMMY TUCK

Abdominoplasty (commonly referred to as tummy tuck) is a frequently performed procedure used to tighten overly stretched abdominal muscles and skin for a smoother, flatter appearance. Once stretched by pregnancy or weight gain, the abdomen often fails to return to its original shape. Stretched beyond their ability to return to normal, these tissues do not respond to exercise or diet programs. In these cases, abdominoplasty provides a long-lasting aesthetically desirable solution.

What are some of the most common benefits of this surgery?

Abdominoplasty can dramatically tighten the abdominal muscles and remove the sagging, excess skin and accumulated fatty tissue. Not only will the abdomen be firmer, tighter and flatter, but the waist will be narrower as well. Properly selected patients can see their waste narrowed as much 4-8 inches. The amount of improvement depends upon the extent of surgery and the patient's skin tone, body build, and healing process. Most people are happy with the results, and report a better body image after Abdominoplasty.

What will happen at the initial consultation?

During the consultation, Dr. Gitt will discuss with you the changes that you would like to make in your appearance. He will explain the different options available to you, the procedure itself, the risks and limitations, and the type of anesthesia that will be used. Dr. Gitt will also evaluate your health, determine the extent of fat deposits in your abdominal region, and carefully assess your skin tone. Many patients will also benefit from simultaneous liposuction of the hips or thighs. At North Valley Plastic Surgery we have found that most abdominoplasty patients also require liposuction of the hips, which we provide at no additional charge to our abdominoplasty patients.

How is this surgery done?

There are several different abdominoplasty techniques. The most common procedure is performed under general anesthesia. In the full abdominoplasty procedure, an incision is made across the lower abdomen, just above the pubic area. Another incision is made around the belly button to free the surrounding skin, and the all of the skin is separated from the abdominal wall. Then the surgeon pulls the loose muscles from the left and the right sides and sutures them together at the midline. This tightens the muscles and creates a stronger abdominal wall and a smaller waist. Excess skin is removed, and a new opening is made for the belly button at the right position. The incisions are closed with sutures (stitches) and/or staples, and gauze is placed over the incision area.

If your only problem area is below the belly button, you may benefit from a less complex procedure called a mini-abdominoplasty, which can often be performed on an outpatient basis, under twilight anesthetic. Sometimes liposuction alone offers the best results.

How long does the surgery take?

Abdominoplasty generally takes about 2-5 hours, depending on the extent of the repair. A mini-abdominoplasty takes about 1 or 2 hours.

Do I have to stay in the hospital?

This depends on the extent of the repair. One overnight stay after the surgery is most common. If the area of repair is minimal, you may be able to go home the same day. This is usually discussed and decided by Dr. Gitt and yourself during the initial consultation.

**How much pain is there?**

For the first few days, your abdomen will probably be swollen and you're likely to feel some pain and discomfort which can be controlled by medication. Depending on the extent of the surgery and the technique used, you may be released within a few hours or you may have to remain hospitalized for two to three days.

What can I expect after surgery?

Bed rest for two to three days is recommended. While in bed, your legs should be bent at the hips in order to reduce the strain on the abdominal area. You will be provided with a firm abdominal binder to offer support to the tightened areas.

You will be given instructions for showering and changing your dressings. We have found that Kotex pads are an excellent and effective dressing for our body contouring patients. Although you may not be able to stand straight at first, you should start walking as soon as possible.

Your drainage tubes will be removed when their output is less than 35cc per drain per day. Other than your drain sutures, we use only absorbable sutures for our abdominoplasty patients.

What is the recovery period like?

It may take you several weeks to feel completely back to normal. If you are in top physical condition, recovery will be much faster. Some people return to work after two weeks, while others take four weeks to recuperate.

After about three days, you may begin light activities. At this point, the gauze may be replaced by a new abdominal supporter. Even if you've never exercised before, you should begin a light exercise program to reduce swelling, lower the chance of blood clots, and improve muscle tone. However, vigorous exercise, especially lifting, should wait until you can do it comfortably and Dr. Gitt gives you permission.

Your scars may appear to worsen during the first few months, but this is normal. It may take up to a year before your scars flatten out and lighten in color. While they'll never disappear completely, these scars will be carefully placed in the suprapubic crease so that they'll be covered by your clothes, including most bathing suits.

What is the long-term outcome like for most people?

As long as you keep your weight relatively constant, eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, and follow Dr. Gitt's instructions about how to resume physical activity, the long-term results from this procedure are generally excellent.

Ideal candidate:

In general, the best candidates for abdominoplasty are:

- 18 years of age or older
- Mature enough to fully understand the procedure
- In relatively good shape, except for the abdominal area
- Not pregnant or planning to become pregnant
- Not severely overweight
- Not planning to lose a considerable amount of weight
- In good health
- Wanting to improve their appearance and/or comfort
- Realistic in their expectations

This is only a partial list of the criteria that Dr. Gitt will consider in determining if this procedure is appropriate for you.

Alternatives:

Strenuous exercise and weight loss alone will reduce the bulk of the abdominal wall and tighten the muscle tone; however,



the stretched skin may not be able to contract without surgery. Ultrasonic liposuction has been touted as causing contraction of excess skin, but most often will not be effective enough to achieve results in patients who consider abdominoplasty.

Risks:

All surgery has some potential risks, including the risks of bleeding, reaction to the anesthetic, and infection. Scars are to be expected, but they will become lighter and flatter with time. Smoking may increase the risk of complications and delay healing. This could result in larger scars, and a second surgery. You can reduce your risk of complications by closely following Dr. Gitt's instructions before and after the surgery, especially with regard to when and how to resume physical activity.