

# Tummy Tuck

## What is a tummy tuck?

A tummy tuck is a cosmetic surgery to remove fat and loose skin from your belly. It also tightens stomach muscles.

The medical term for tummy tuck is abdominoplasty.

## When is it used?

A number of things can make your tummy flabby:

- Weight loss, or weight gain and a loss of muscle tone from not getting enough exercise, can cause a flabby tummy. After several pregnancies, a woman's muscles and skin can become stretched past the point where they can return to their previous shape.
- As you get older, your skin loses its elasticity, making the stomach look flabby and fat.

Diet and exercise can help, but you may want to consider a tummy tuck to help the way you look. People who have the best results from this procedure are at or near a healthy weight.

## How do I prepare for this procedure?

- Tell your provider if you have any food or medicine allergies.
- Make plans for your care and recovery after you have the procedure. Find someone to give you a ride home after the procedure. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help with your day-to-day tasks while you recover.
- Follow your provider's instructions about not smoking before and after the procedure. Smokers may have more breathing problems during the procedure and heal more slowly. It is best to quit 6 to 8 weeks before surgery.
- You may or may not need to take your regular medicines the day of the procedure. Some medicines (like aspirin) may increase your risk of bleeding during or after the procedure. Tell your healthcare provider about all medicines and supplements that you take. Ask your provider if you need to avoid taking any medicine or supplements before the procedure.
- Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop eating and drinking before the procedure. This helps to keep you from vomiting during the procedure.
- Follow any instructions your healthcare provider may give you.
- Ask any questions you have before the procedure. You should understand what your healthcare provider is going to do. You have the right to make decisions about your healthcare and to give permission for any tests or procedures.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

The surgery can be done in a surgery center or a hospital. If it is done in a hospital, your provider may want you to stay there for several days.

You will be given a local or general anesthetic before the procedure to keep you from feeling pain. Local anesthesia numbs part of your body while you stay awake. You may be given medicine with the local anesthetic to help you relax. General anesthesia relaxes your muscles and you will be asleep.

Your healthcare provider will make cuts around your belly area to create a large skin flap. Your provider will pull the flap away from the muscles. Some fat may be removed, and the muscles will be tightened. Your provider will then put the skin flap back into place, trim off extra skin, and close the cuts with stitches.

A tummy tuck usually takes 2 to 5 hours.

## **What happens after the procedure?**

You may stay in the hospital for a few hours or up to several days.

You may need to wear support garments for several months.

There is usually not a lot of scarring. Within 9 months, the scars flatten and lighten in color.

If you follow a healthy diet and get regular exercise, your tummy may stay flatter and firmer for a long time.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. Ask your provider:

- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

## **What are the risks of this procedure?**

Every procedure or treatment has risks. Some possible risks of this procedure include:

- You may have problems with anesthesia.
- You may have infection, bleeding, or blood clots.
- Nerves may be damaged.

Ask your healthcare provider how these risks apply to you. Be sure to discuss any other questions or concerns that you may have.

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