



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLASTIC SURGEONS

Answers to common tummy tuck questions

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A tummy tuck is a surgical procedure that removes the extra skin and fat of the abdomen and repairs the paired six-pack muscles that may have separated after childbirth, weight gain, or aging. After a tummy tuck, patients enjoy a flat abdominal contour and a stronger core.

If you are considering tummy tuck surgery, you undoubtedly have questions. Below are the answers to the most common questions people have about tummy tuck surgery.

What should you expect during your tummy tuck consultation?

Your board-certified plastic surgeon will provide a comprehensive and personalized consultation which includes a detailed patient history, physical examination, treatment options and before and after photos. During your consultation, your plastic surgeon will work to tailor your procedure according to your desires and goals for the tummy tuck.

What happens during tummy tuck surgery?

During tummy tuck surgery, your plastic surgeon will work diligently to remove the extra skin and fat of the abdomen and repair the separation of your abdominal muscles. Liposuction may be added to contour the abdomen and flanks if needed.

What should you expect after tummy tuck surgery?

After surgery, you will be placed in a compression garment, which will be worn for 4-6 weeks after surgery to help with reducing swelling. You may feel some pain or discomfort, but most patients are able to manage post-procedure pain or discomfort with just a few days of pain medications.

You will be bent at the waist while standing or lying down for 7-10 days after surgery to protect the incision and to allow for your skin to adapt. After this time, you will be able to stand up straight. If a drain is placed, then it will be removed as soon as the output is low enough (usually in 1-2 weeks).

What is the recovery after tummy tuck surgery?

You can walk the day of surgery. In fact, most plastic surgeons encourage patients to walk three times the day of surgery to improve blood circulation to keep the risk of blood clots in the legs to a minimum. However, running or lifting should be avoided for six weeks after the procedure.

Patients typically return to work in approximately two weeks. The bruising will subside in a couple of weeks, and the swelling will continue to diminish until approximately three months post-procedure. The scars will continue to heal and will become thinner and lighter in color at around 12-18 months.

What are the risks of tummy tuck surgery?

As with any surgery, there is a small risk of bleeding and infection. Great care is taken to ensure that these risks are kept to the absolute minimum with meticulous surgical technique. In addition, there is a small risk of blood clots in the legs or lungs.

Due to this risk, compression boots on your calves during surgery are placed to help circulation, and a low dose of blood thinner may be used. Adequate hydration and ambulation are also important to lower the risk of blood clots after surgery.

What are some long-term considerations after a tummy tuck?

With stable weight, tummy tuck results are stable over time. If you experience any weight fluctuations or become pregnant, this may change your tummy tuck result.

Starting your tummy tuck journey

If you think that tummy tuck surgery might be right for you and your aesthetic goals, be sure to meet with a board-certified plastic surgeon for a consultation. You can use the ASPS Plastic Surgeon Match referral service to find ASPS member surgeons in your area.

The views expressed in this blog are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.