



# Patient Information Guide

## Abdominoplasty

*(Tummy-Tuck)*

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## *Topics to be discussed with your Surgeon - Things you need to know*

### 1. SURGICAL CONSULTATION

#### Anatomy

After a history and examination your surgeon will discuss the anatomical areas that need to be addressed in surgery including removal of excess skin, fat and tightening of the tummy muscles.

#### Types of Tummy tucks:

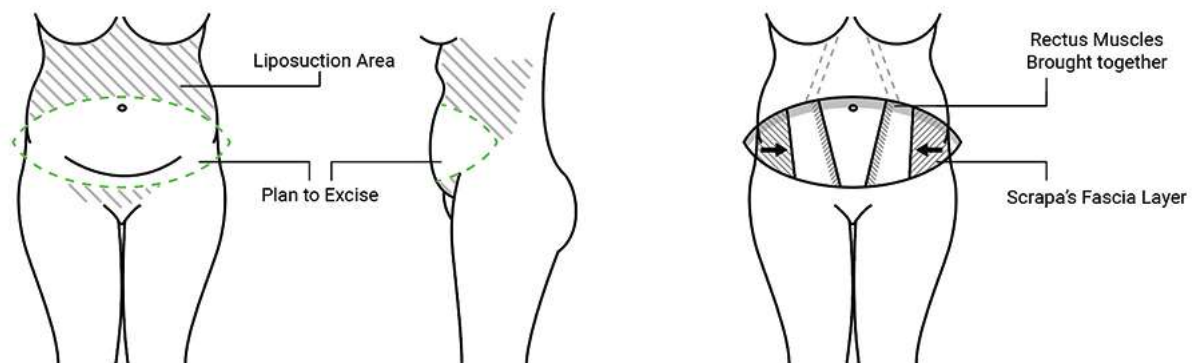
Mini tummy tuck – idea for small fold of excess skin for example post caesarean.

Modified Brazilian tummy tuck (MBTT) – replaces the bigger more traditional tummy tuck.

Fleur de Lys – used for massive weight loss surgery patients with vertical and horizontal skin laxity

#### How the operation is performed:

This is performed usually under a general anaesthetic with the option of a day case (mini-tummy tuck) or a planned overnight stay (MBTT)

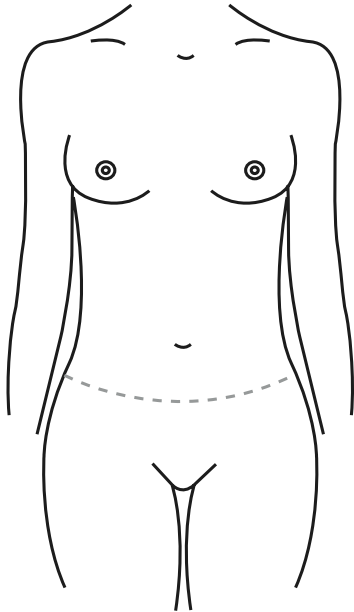


#### The site of the Incision:

Your surgeon will demonstrate the position of the planned. The incisions length and position will depend on the type of operation performed, but the lower incision is usually placed within natural skin folds, with the plan to have the scar sitting within the underwear line. The Fleur de Lys also has a vertical scar to address the lateral laxity in the tissues following weight loss.

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### The types of Stitches/sutures:

All sutures are placed below the skin and are dissolved by the body over the course of a few weeks. Nothing needs to be pulled out/removed. Often surgeons will seal the wound with tissue glue, and a specialized tape (Preneo®).

This acts to limit the risk of superficial wound infection from the normal bugs we all have on our skin. This glue and tape peels off after approximately 2 weeks.

**Ideal situation of scar post op – hidden within the underwear line.**

### Surgical drains:

No drains are used.

### Shape of the tummy after operation:

Depending on the operation performed it is not unusual to get some swelling post op. This can be quite dramatic when the operation includes liposuction as you may get bruising as well. This will settle over the coming weeks. The final result will be seen some 4-6 months post op.

### Asymmetry:

We all have some form of asymmetry across the body, and the abdominal wall is no different, especially after pregnancy or any surgery such as caesarean sections. These differences will be pointed out to you pre-operatively. Your surgery will make every effort to correct these differences, but a small amount of asymmetry may remain after the operation, including the scar. We accept that it is within normal limits.

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### Potential risks of the operation:

- 1) **Swelling and bruising** – This is not uncommon especially with liposuction included, as described above it may take a few weeks to settle.
- 2) **Pain** – mild discomfort is what is expected after surgery, which is usually treated with simple analgesia. If you are in severe pain you need to tell your surgeon.
- 3) **Bleeding** – small amount of oozing from the wound edge may occur especially over the first 24-48 hours, but simple gentle pressure will make this stop. If you develop a significant bleed, the abdomen may swell, or bleed through the wound edges. If this occurs you will need to return to theatre.
- 4) **Infection** – Rare after this type of surgery, but if the area becomes swollen and painful a course of oral and topical antibiotics may be prescribed by your surgeon.
- 5) **Scarring** – The size length and position of the scar would have been discussed with you in your pre-operative consultation. However, everybody heals differently and all scars at the start are usually red, possibly a bit lumpy and then with time and regular massage will begin to fade.
- 6) **Stitch abscess** – very occasionally a deep suture (stitch) takes longer than expected to be absorbed by the body and then works its way to the surface and looks just like a small pimple within the scar. If the spot opens, this may cause anxiety, but in fact is a minor problem that the plastic surgery nurses can manage easily in the dressing clinic. All it takes is a clean of the area and a quick pull with some tweezers.
- 7) **Seroma collection** – a rare occurrence with the mini tummy tuck and MBTT. It is a simple collection of fluid within the wound that requires drainage if symptomatic. The procedure is quick simple, painless and requires no anaesthetic.
- 8) **Alteration in sensation**- it is not uncommon to have altered sensation over the lower half of the abdomen after the operation. Around the scar may be permanently numb.
- 9) **Revision surgery over time** – this may occur due to changes over time with weight changes (increase or weight loss), pregnancy.

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### Post-operative dressings/support:

You will wake up in a specialized post-operative abdominal support and binder. The binder is used for added support for between 1-3 days, before being removed. The specialized abdominal garment is to be used for 6 weeks. A Plastic Surgery Clinic nursing appointment will be made for you on week 1, 2 and 6 after your surgery. I will ask you to contact my secretary to arrange a convenient time follow up appointment in approximately 4-6months.

### What about pain relief and antibiotics:

You will not be allowed home until you are comfortable and pain free. We send you home with a range of different painkillers (mild, moderate and strong) and a course of oral antibiotics as part of our standard package of care.

### Pre-assessment:

You will require an assessment with the nursing team a few weeks before surgery. Ideally this is done face to face, but may on occasion be done telephonically. During this period you will have an opportunity to discuss any aspect of your surgery at that time.

## 2. PREPARATION BEFORE SURGERY

It is advised that you undertake all of the household duties prior to your admission to hospital, as you will not be able to perform these for a while afterwards. This includes vacuuming, dusting, and clothes washing, ironing and shopping i.e. no pushing, pulling, lifting .

**DO NOT take any Aspirin or medication containing Aspirin for at least 7 days prior to surgery.** (Aspirin may be re commenced after 48hrs post op.) If you take Aspirin or any other form of blood thinning medication for a medical condition, please discuss with your surgeon.

We routinely give you medication to help bruising and swelling so, I prefer if you do not take Arnica during the period prior to surgery. If you do want to take it please start it at least 24hours post surgery.

### Food and drink

No food for 6 hours before your operation/admission. After that time you may drink only small sips of clear fluid (i.e. water only) up to 2 hours prior to your admission.

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### 3. WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY OF THE OPERATION

On arrival you will have routine observations performed and a check of all the relevant paperwork carried out by the nursing staff. Then you will be asked to change into a gown.

All your jewellery must be removed, including ALL metal body piercings. It is recommended that you do not bring anything of value into hospital.

All makeup must be removed as it can damage your eyes if left on while you are asleep. You must also remove all nail varnish and acrylic nails.

#### What will happen when I wake up?

You will find yourself sitting upright, supported with pillows below the legs. It is important that you remain in this position to help reduce the swelling unless indicated otherwise. Do not try to move yourself up the bed, using your legs and stomach, as this action may pull on the tissues of your abdomen and could potentially cause bleeding. If you want to move, especially in the early post operative period, get some help from the nursing team, and use your upper body preferentially.

You will be allowed out of bed to pass urine (water) with the assistance of the nursing staff the first time, in case you feel lightheaded. Because you are lying / sitting more upright than normal for the first few days after the operation, it is quite common for the small of your back to be uncomfortable. It helps if you move slightly from one buttock to the other to relieve the pressure.

### 4. AFTER YOUR OPERATION

#### Travelling – home and afterwards

When you travel home you may want to put some padding or a small towel/pillow under the car seat belt, as it could rub and be uncomfortable across your tummy. It is recommended that you **do not drive for 14 days following surgery**.

#### At Home

**It is important that you have total rest.** This means do nothing that will raise your blood pressure, including physical activities, sexual activities and housework during the first 2 weeks. This could induce a bleed, and add to the swelling. You can potter about and undertake activities that do not involve pulling, pushing and lifting.

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### 5. AFTER THE FIRST TWO WEEKS

Start returning to your normal activities of living. Be sensitive to your body and try not to do too much too soon. Therefore, if you experience any pain, stop and try again another day. You can drive and start lifting light objects. Gym activities, aerobics or sports should be avoided for six weeks.

Massage/moisturise; Treat the whole abdomen, including scar. Use the palm of your hand in a gentle circular movement, using a moisturising cream for dry skin, e.g. E45. This helps to soften your skin, adjacent tissue, and adjust to its new contour.

### 6. GENERAL INFO /FAQ'S

#### *Will I need to wear a support garment?*

Wear your support for 24 hours a day during the first week, for the next 5 weeks it may be removed for showering only.

#### *What is the best position for me to sleep in?*

Sleep on your back with one or two extra pillows during the first 2 weeks, as this will help to reduce swelling.

#### *Will I be in much pain?*

It will be uncomfortable over the first few days; this varies from person to person. Analgesia (painkillers) will be prescribed to take home.

Skin care: After the first week you can apply moisturising cream, to keep the skin supple, best performed straight after showering.

#### *What about Work / Sport / Leisure?*

It is recommended that you take 2 to 3 weeks off work.

If you have an active hobby/leisure interest, please ask the surgeon or nurse for advice.

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### *Can I lift my Children?*

If you have young children or babies, please do not lift them. However you may still maintain your bond with a cuddle, but protect your abdomen with a pillow or towel. It is recommended that you get help with care for your children during the first 2 weeks of recovery.

### *Should I take special precautions when bathing?*

Please keep the wounds dry for the first week. After you first post-operative check with the nurse at 1 week, you will be advised if you can then shower.

### *How soon after my procedure can I sun bathe?*

Ideally do not get the scar exposed to the sun. If you do, please cover and protect the scars with permanent sunblock.

### *Should I adjust my diet?*

Maintain a healthy nutritious diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, as this is important for wound healing and bowels.

### *Will my procedure affect my bowel movements?*

As you are inactive and due to use of painkillers, you may become constipated. For your own comfort and wellbeing, prevent this from happening. Purchase an aperient such as Senokot® or what ever has suited you in the past.

### *How soon after my procedure can I fly?*

If possible avoid flying for the first six weeks, wear flight socks and take low dose aspirin before flying.