



AS SEEN IN COSMETIC SURGERY & BEAUTY MAGAZINE



The modern tummy tuck

SYDNEY PLASTIC SURGEON **DR ALEX PHOON** DESCRIBES HOW ABDOMINOPLASTY CAN HELP RESTORE THE SHAPE AND SILHOUETTE OF PRE-BABY BODIES.

Abdominoplasty is the medical term for what is commonly known as a tummy tuck. Traditionally, it involves the removal of some or all of the lower abdominal skin and fat below the belly button and tightening of the central core abdominal muscles. Modern abdominoplasty has now evolved to use the complementary technique of liposculpture to contour the waist, lower back and upper abdomen at the same time. It is one of the most common plastic surgical procedures performed today, particularly for women after they have had children.

Changes to the body after pregnancy are entirely normal and are partly due to the ageing process, as well as how women's bodies have to adapt for pregnancy. The extent of these changes can vary from one person to the next; one woman may have almost no changes at all after pregnancy, while the next may have profound muscle weakness, hernias and stretch marks.

There is no doubt pressure in society for women to achieve their pre-pregnancy figure in the shortest possible time. This is potentially unhealthy for both the mother and child. In such a busy and exhausting time of their lives, women should be allowed to focus on returning to good health and looking after their children without people pushing the idea they should be at their pre-baby size.

But what happens when, despite all the healthy dieting and exercise, women are still unhappy with their figure? This decision is a very personal one for any woman to make, but abdominoplasty may be the answer.

Part of the problem is that skin will often contract to a point but beyond that may remain loose. Any stretch marks tend to be permanent. With an appropriate exercise plan, some women will have their abdominal muscles come back together but others will find there will be a gap, or what is known medically as a 'diastasis' of the rectus abdominus muscles. In the most extreme cases, there may also be

hernias, such as the patient in Case 1. When there is excess skin combined with a separation of the central abdominal muscles, there can be both a functional and cosmetic problem where surgery may be the only thing that might help.

Abdominoplasty involves removing this excess skin and fat from below the belly button and tightening the abdominal muscles at the same time. The final scar is made as low as possible, ideally at the level of the bikini or the underwear line. The belly button is repositioned once the skin is pulled down.

The procedure involves a general anaesthetic and a few days in hospital post-operatively. Most patients can resume work after a couple of weeks and can return to light activities after about one week. Long-term results can be maintained with a healthy lifestyle.

For the right patient, an abdominoplasty, or tummy tuck, can make a huge impact on their quality of life

Wherever possible I also include liposculpture to the 'muffin top' or flank area to accentuate a woman's silhouette at the same time. These areas can be difficult to target through diet and exercise alone. My personal philosophy is to create the best tummy possible for each patient while improving post-operative pain and healing.

I routinely use quilting stitches internally to minimise the length of time my patients have drains and the latest Pain-Buster anaesthetic pump device. This local anaesthetic infusion device has revolutionised my patient care, with the vast majority of patients not needing anything more than Panadol in the first few days post-op. This means a

body

lower reliance on drugs such as morphine which can cause nausea as well as bloating, sleepiness and discomfort. Scar management techniques are also employed post-operatively to minimise the appearance of the scar.

Like any surgery, abdominoplasty comes with inherent risks and complications, which makes it especially important for patients to choose a skilled and experienced surgeon. The consultation is also a key component to ensuring optimal results. Together, the patient and surgeon devise

an operative plan to achieve the best results possible. I also use 3D Vectra digital imaging, which enables us to map out the finer details of the operation and get an idea of what the final result will most likely be.

For the right patient, an abdominoplasty can make a huge impact on their quality of life. A good diet and exercise will always be the mainstay of a healthy lifestyle, but a tummy tuck may be a viable option when these simply aren't enough. **csbm**



BEFORE
Two weeks **AFTER** surgery by Dr Phoon
This woman had twins and, despite being very fit and active, her central muscles had split and she had a resultant hernia at the level of the belly button and lower abdominal bulge. Excess loose skin, the hernia and the separated muscle were all treated with an abdominoplasty without liposuction.



BEFORE
Three weeks **AFTER** surgery by Dr Phoon
This woman had six children and wanted an abdominoplasty to improve the contour around her waist. A standard abdominoplasty was performed with liposuction to the flank and lower back (3L removed).



BEFORE
Four weeks **AFTER** surgery by Dr Phoon
This woman had lost a significant amount of weight. She has had no previous pregnancies but a previous breast reduction and she now felt her bust was too small and out of balance for her frame. She had abdominoplasty and liposuction with additional breast augmentation at the same time.
Photos taken from 3D images of real before and after photos.