

Patient Information Sheet

Abdominoplasty

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What is an Abdominoplasty?

An abdominoplasty is reshaping of the abdomen. This operation should not be regarded as a means of reducing the overall body weight but aims improving the appearance of the abdomen and may be considered as an option by patients who wish to improve the contour in the region of the waist and lower abdomen or have lax skin removed following weight loss or pregnancy.

Preoperative assessment

Preoperative examination includes assessment of the laxity of the skin and its quality, including the presence of stretch marks. It is usually possible to remove all the skin and underlying fatty tissue between the pubis and the tummy button, with repositioning of the later. If there is not sufficient skin laxity to permit this, it may be necessary to add a vertical mid line scar in addition to the horizontal scar which runs from one hip region to the other, just above the pubis within the bikini line. It should be possible to correct any separation of the abdominal muscles and to tighten the sheath in which they are enveloped at the same time. Any excessive fatty deposits on the sides are removed by liposuction

The operation

Surgery is performed under general anaesthesia and you will be asked not to eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the operation. Local anaesthetic solution is also injected during the surgery to help with postoperative pain relief.

The excess skin and fat are removed, the muscle sheaths tightened and the tummy-button repositioned. Dissolving stitches placed underneath the skin surface are used throughout and two suction drains are used to remove any fluid which may collect after the surgery. Most patients spend one night in hospital.

After surgery

The dressings are left intact for about a week, and you will be asked to keep the area dry during this period. The drains are removed before you go home and you will be encouraged to be mobile the day after surgery. Many patients find wearing an elasticised garment like high cycling shorts helpful. The initial stiffness and soreness settles within a few days and you will only require simple painkillers. A lot of the swelling and bruising settles within 3 weeks, but it continues to improve over the next 6-12 months. There is numbness just below the scar, and this also improves with time, but will not disappear completely. The scars take approximately 18 months to mature and are permanent but will fade.

Possible complications

- The most significant complication is clotting of the blood in the veins of the legs and you will be encouraged to mobilise the day after surgery to reduce the risk.

- Some patients require adjustment of the lateral ends of the scars under local anaesthesia a few months after surgery. This two stage approach can help reduce the overall length of the scar.
- As after any surgery, bleeding and infection can occur., but these are uncommon.
- Sometimes, the blood supply of the residual fat is compromised and this may present as lumpiness or oozing from the incision.
- Occasionally, a collection of fluid appears under the skin and this may require drainage with a syringe.
- The incidence of complications is much higher in patients who smoke.