

Plastic Surgery
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Q&A

What is a “Mommy Makeover”?

A “Mommy Makeover” is where we address those changes that have occurred as a result of pregnancy. The most common areas where women see changes are in their breasts, the trunk region, and their extremities.

Is there a one-size-fits-all procedure for shaping the breasts after pregnancy?

The effects of pregnancy on the breasts can be different for each patient. Most women will notice more ptosis or drooping of the breasts after pregnancy because of the stretching of the skin caused by the production of breast milk. This can be treated by a breast lift or mastopexy. Some women will have “post-partum involution,” which is when the breasts are actually smaller after pregnancy than they were prior to pregnancy. This is addressed by increasing the volume of the breasts with a breast augmentation. It’s not unusual for some patients to benefit from both a breast lift and a breast augmentation. Finally, some patients end up with breasts that are larger (and droopier) than they were prior to pregnancy. They will benefit from a breast reduction, which both lifts and decreases the volume of the breasts. There are not any great procedures for improving stretch marks on the breasts.

How can the shape of the abdominal area be improved after giving birth?

For most women, pregnancy causes the skin of the abdomen to stretch, and it also causes a separation of the rectus muscles (six-pack muscles). Exercise will not help tighten the abdominal skin, nor will it help bring the muscles back together. An abdominoplasty, also known as a “tummy tuck,” is a procedure that removes the excess skin and fat of the anterior abdomen. It also addresses the separation of the rectus muscles by suturing them back together. (Think of it as wearing a corset underneath your skin.) This can be combined with liposuction of the love handles to help improve the hip-to-waist ratio that can be lost during pregnancy. Optimally,

the circumference measured around a woman's waist should be about 70 percent of the circumference around the hips. As the ratio gets closer to 1-to-1, it becomes more of a "masculine" shape, and the combination of an abdominoplasty and liposuction can improve this ratio. Occasionally, a woman will have some fat on the lower abdomen but won't have a significant skin excess, and they can benefit from liposuction of the anterior abdomen instead of an abdominoplasty. The final benefit of an abdominoplasty is that it will remove the stretch marks that are located below the belly button.

Are contouring procedures typically done on the arms and legs after pregnancy?

Arms and legs are usually the least affected areas. These areas don't tend to have stretched out skin, so skin excision procedures are usually unnecessary. Sometimes there will be a localized fat deposit that is addressed with liposuction, particularly on the inner or outer thighs. Cellulite is frequently seen on the legs, and there aren't any great, reliable treatments to address it. Varicose veins are common on the legs, with the left side usually having more varicose veins than the right side. These can be treated with injections or lasers depending on the size of the vein.

BIO

Dr. Boswell is a board-certified plastic surgeon who has been practicing in St. Louis for more than a decade. Dr. Boswell offers a wide range of surgical and non-surgical options for facial rejuvenation, breast shaping, and body contouring to help patients choose the most appropriate treatment. He has been selected as one of the area's best plastic surgeons and has been included in "Guide to America's Top Surgeons," a resource compiled by the Consumers' Research Council of America. He has been named to the Best Doctors® list every year since 2007.