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PLASTIC SURGERY

Care after Abdominoplasty (Tummy Tuck)

This page contains answers to frequently asked questions regarding your care after an abdominoplasty. This information will help you remember the instructions given to you after surgery.

What will I see when I look into a mirror?

It will be difficult to stand up straight for several days. Your abdomen will feel tight and may appear mildly bruised and slightly swollen. The contour of your abdomen will not take its final shape for several weeks after the surgery. You may notice a “ruffled” appearance to the surgical closure, which is normal and will flatten with time.

When can I shower or take a bath?

You may not shower until after your first post op visit. Your original dressings and binder from surgery should remain on until your scheduled post op follow up appointment. You may sponge bath, but no showers until your drains are removed.

How do I care for my drains?

Your drains are held in place with stitches to your skin and should always be supported to avoid pulling on the drain. The easiest method is to safety pin the drain bulb to your abdominal binder or use the Velcro band provided. Drains are generally removed within 7 to 10 days after your surgery. Monitor your drain output daily and record on the sheet given after surgery. Please bring the drain sheet to your post op appointments.

Should I wear a tummy support?

For your comfort, we recommend that you wear an abdominal support garment for 6 weeks following your surgery, removing the garment only for bathing. You will wear the surgical support provided to you for several weeks.

What can I do after surgery?

You will gradually be able to stand upright over the first week. Many patients find it easier to sleep in a recliner for a few days after the surgery. You should walk every day but have someone assist you for the first few days. You should not lift anything heavier than five pounds or participate in heavy exercise for six weeks after the surgery. After six weeks, gradually return to your normal activities and exercise routines. Depending on the type of work you do, you should be able to return to your job in 4-6 weeks or as soon as you are comfortable. If your job does not require heavy activity, you should be able to go back in three weeks.

When can I drive?

You generally should be able to drive about seven to ten days after surgery, if you feel up to it. You should never drive if you are still taking any prescription pain medication.

How much pain will I have?

The most discomfort that you will have lasts 5 days, sometimes a little longer. As you feel more comfortable, your need for pain medication will lessen.

What medications should I use?

We will prescribe a pain medication for you to take after your surgery. Follow the directions on the bottle for their use. The pain medication may make you feel drowsy, so please have someone assist you at home and do not drive while you are taking prescription pain medication. A few days after surgery most patients will find that Tylenol will take care of the discomfort. Do not use aspirin or ibuprofen (Motrin) for seven days after the surgery.

Can I drink alcohol?

Do not drink alcohol for five days after your surgery or while taking narcotic pain medicines.

When will I be seen in the office after surgery?

You will normally be seen in the office within one week of your surgery, and then periodically for up to 6 months.

Additional appointments may be necessary.

How will I know if I am having a problem?

Urgent problems after abdominoplasty do not occur frequently. These are the complications that will require a change in your post-operative care:

Hematoma (blood collecting under your incisions) can occur within a few days of your surgery. The warning signs are:

- Severe pain that does not respond to medication
- Significant swelling in your abdomen
- Excessive or growing bruising

Infection is rare following abdominoplasty surgery. It is normal to have a small amount of drainage from the incisions and around your belly button for a few days. Signs of infection are:

- Increased temperature
- Increasing drainage from the incisions
- Increasing redness around the incisions

Leg swelling (with or without associated pain) may indicate a problem with the vein circulation in your leg(s). Although some swelling is to be expected due to your surgery, intravenous fluids given to you during the surgery, and your decreased level of activity, this swelling is normally mild, painless, and affects both legs evenly. If you have a large amount of leg swelling (either one or both legs), or if you experience pain in your legs, contact the office immediately.

Breathing problems after abdominoplasty are rare but can be a serious complication. If you develop any chest and/or back pain or shortness of breath, you must contact my office or be seen in the nearest emergency medical facility without delay.

Medication reactions may occur with the drugs prescribed for you. If you develop a skin rash, itching, vomiting, or diarrhea, stop taking your medication and contact my office.

If you have any of the above problems or other questions, contact my office at 440-461-7999