

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



This whitepaper is presented by M. Azhar Ali, M.D. F.A.C.S., of Amae Plastic Surgery in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The following information about abdominoplasty, most commonly known as a tummy tuck procedure, is intended to be informational and introductory. We strongly advise that anyone looking to have a tummy tuck procedure, or a cosmetic surgery of any kind, schedules a professional consultation with a plastic surgeon that is board-certified by the [American Society of Plastic Surgeons](#).

For more specific information on tummy tuck procedures, or to schedule an immediate consultation with Dr. Ali, please contact us.

About Dr. Ali

Dr. Ali is a board-certified [Michigan plastic surgeon](#). Through his private practice, Amae Plastic Surgery Center, he has performed numerous tummy tuck procedures. Powerfully motivated to help others, he has followed his dream and has successfully pursued the art of plastic and reconstructive surgery, and has established a distinguished career in the field.

Following his medical schooling, Dr. Ali engaged in 11 years of additional training. His extensive training includes:

- Fellowship in Aesthetic and Reconstructive Breast Surgery at Women's College Hospital in Toronto
- Fellowship in Microsurgery and Trauma at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto
- 1 year fellowship at Children's Hospital in Toronto, Canada for Pediatric Surgery
- 2 years of plastic surgery at Providence Hospital
- 5 years of general surgery training at Providence and North Oakland hospitals in Michigan
- 1 year pediatric internship in New York

In addition to education and training, Dr. Ali belongs to numerous professional organizations including the American College of Surgeons, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, American Medical Society, Michigan State Medical Society, and Oakland County Medical Society.

Introduction: What is a "Tummy Tuck?"

Also known as abdominoplasty, this common procedure removes excess fat and skin from the middle and lower abdomen, and in most cases restores weakened or separated muscles of the abdominal wall. As a result, the abdominal profile becomes smoother and firmer through addressing three key anatomical structures:

- Abdominal muscles
- Abdominal fat
- Abdominal skin excess

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



Am I a Candidate for a Tummy Tuck Procedure?

A firm midsection is something many men and women strive for, but it is not always obtainable through strict diet and exercise. Tummy tucks are not a substitution for healthy living and a tummy tuck is not a weight loss surgery, but rather is a procedure that can help with loss of muscle tone and firmness that is a result of pregnancy, age, weight loss or bariatric surgery.

During pregnancy, a woman's abdominal muscles are subjected to a great deal of stretch. The abdominal muscles separate in the midline and stretch marks appear over the abdominal skin. When the pregnancy is over, the excess skin in many cases fails to shrink back to its original state and the muscles fail to regain their tone. Fat deposition also takes place during pregnancy and many times these specific areas are resilient to any type of exercise or dieting efforts.

Tummy tuck procedures are also popular for patients who have had some type of bariatric (weight loss) surgery, since the rapid loss of a significant amount of weight often results in an abundance of skin surrounding the abdomen.

In addition to post-pregnancy and bariatric patients, hereditary conditions as well as aging can also have a similar effect on a patient's abdominal tissues. The muscles lose their tone, the skin becomes saggy and fat deposition takes place over the abdomen.

You may be a good candidate for a tummy tuck procedure if:

- You are physically healthy and at a stable weight
- You do not smoke
- You have excess or sagging abdominal skin
- You have an abdomen that is out of proportion in comparison to the rest of your body
- You have abdominal muscles that have been separated or weakened
- You have excess fatty tissue in your abdomen
- You have realistic expectations

Setting Your Expectations for a Tummy Tuck Procedure

Women and men who have a significant amount of loose abdominal skin and fat that is concentrated in the abdomen can truly benefit from abdominoplasty, but it is extremely important that the patient has realistic expectations prior to the procedure.

A tummy tuck procedure is NOT a substitute for weight loss, a balanced diet, or exercise. Also, a tummy tuck cannot correct stretch marks, unless the stretch marks are located on the excess skin that is to be removed (generally below the belly button).

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



A cosmetic procedure of any kind is a highly individualized procedure. Patients should only undergo a cosmetic procedure for themselves for their own personal reasons, and never to fulfill some type of ideal image, or another individual's expectations.

Although the results of a tummy tuck are intended to be permanent, a patient can negatively affect the procedure's outcome by demonstrating significant fluctuations in their weight. Individuals who undergo abdominoplasty are advised to maintain their weight in the future, and avoid future pregnancies.

Your Consultation Prior to Surgery

Prior to a tummy tuck procedure, it is highly recommended that the patient consult with the board-certified plastic surgeon that will be performing the procedure to discuss at length various health topics and concerns.

The surgeon will also want to discuss the patient's medical history including:

- Past surgeries
- Past and current medical conditions
- Any medications and vitamins currently being taken
- Any and all supplements being consumed
- Any patient allergies

There are a number of factors that a board-certified plastic surgeon will evaluate before selecting the appropriate procedure and course of action. First, the patient's skin excess and quality is addressed as this determines the length and pattern of skin excision (skin removal).

Second, the integrity of the abdominal muscles is assessed. It is imperative that the surgeon detect any hernia or muscle separation. Fat distribution also needs to be carefully evaluated, because in order to obtain an aesthetically pleasing abdomen it is necessary to sculpt the fat during the operation.

Prior to a tummy tuck surgery, you may be asked to get lab testing if you have a pre-existing condition that the surgeon is concerned about. You may also be asked to take certain medications, adjust your current medications, or avoid taking aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs, as they can increase bleeding during surgery.

Your board-certified plastic surgeon will also provide you with all necessary information as it relates to preparation for the day of surgery, the use of anesthesia and post-operative care.

What Does the Procedure Entail?

The surgical procedure needs to be tailored to the patient's needs and physical attributes. There are two types of tummy tuck procedures available: a traditional, full abdominoplasty and a mini-

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



abdominoplasty. Both procedures are surgical procedures that require anesthesia and significant recovery time.

Traditional Full Abdominoplasty

A traditional full abdominoplasty procedure begins with a horizontal incision made across the patient's pubic area that gently curves up. It is recommended that the patient wear their under garment prior to surgery so that the scar can be placed accordingly for least exposure.

The skin is then lifted off the muscles, which are then tightened and excess skin and fat are removed. Liposuction is then performed in a strategic fashion so that the desired contouring can be obtained without compromising the blood supply. Another incision will be placed around the umbilicus (the belly button) to gain access to the upper abdomen and remove the excess skin and fat located there.

Liposuction slims and reshapes specific areas of the abdomen by removing excess fat deposits through the utilization of a suctioning tube/device. Liposuction improves your abdomen's contours and proportion, and ultimately, enhances your self-image. In a traditional full abdominoplasty, temporary drains are usually left in place to drain any fluid accumulation after the surgery, and can often be removed within just one week.

Mini-Abdominoplasty

For patients who have slight skin excess and abdominal laxity, a mini-abdominoplasty may be an option. Mini-abdominoplasties permit a patient to recover within a shorter period of time.

During this procedure, access to the abdominal wall is gained through a very small incision made in the lower abdominal wall (versus the horizontal incision made across the patient's pubic area, as for a traditional full abdominoplasty). Because a mini-abdominoplasty is less invasive, the belly button does not usually need to be repositioned. The surgeon focuses more heavily on the skin, fat and muscles beneath the naval.

Drains are not usually necessary after this procedure, and patients are left with a smaller scar on the lower abdomen. As a reminder, only a board-certified plastic surgeon can determine which procedure is right for you.

Healing & Recovery

You'll need some help getting around after your tummy tuck surgery. Be sure to arrange for a friend or family member to drive you to and from the hospital and, if possible, to stay with you for at a day or so following surgery.

Also, prepare your home. Following the surgery, your mobility will be limited. Be sure to stock up on ice packs, loose and comfortable clothing that is easy to change in and out of, and a bathroom chair or hand-held shower head for easier bathing.

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



At Amae Plastic Surgery Center, we have worked directly with our anesthesiologist to develop a special technique of administering a long term anesthetic, which makes this procedure as pain free as possible. For patients experiencing more discomfort than usual, this can be easily controlled with a prescription to pain medication.

If drain tubes were necessary with the procedure they will likely be removed within the first week of surgery during a scheduled follow-up consultation. Some swelling and bruising will occur, which usually subsides over the next few weeks.

Most surgeons now use absorbable sutures which are placed under the skin and are naturally decomposed by the body. Therefore, the doctor will not need to remove stitches at subsequent follow up appointments.

Tummy tuck patients are often advised to wear a support binder for several weeks and are encouraged to walk with a slight hunch for the first week to avoid any stress on the incision line and ensure the best results possible. After 6 weeks, the patient can stop wearing the binder and drive.

Patients should be realistic about their timeline of healing and take it easy. It may take up to 6 to 8 months to see the absolute final results; however within just one or two weeks, many patients start standing with much better posture and confidence because of their new profile.

Risk of a Tummy Tuck

Rare but serious risks associated with tummy tuck procedures include a bad reaction to anesthesia, blood clots, bleeding, nerve damage, unfavorable scarring, infection, fluid accumulation, and slow healing —risks that come along with many surgical procedures.

Risks are often dependent upon the health and risk factors of the patient, which is why it is critical that during your initial consultation you provide a complete and honest disclosure about any drug allergies, medical history, medications, and pre-existing conditions.

The best way to decrease your risk is to trust an experienced, board-certified plastic surgeon that performs tummy tuck procedures at a respected hospital. The American Society of Plastic Surgery offers a plastic surgeon referral service free of charge, where future patients can select the doctor that is right for them. This organization holds its members to exceptionally high standards to ensure that their training and experience completely qualifies them to practice such procedures.

Selecting Your Board-Certified Plastic Surgeon

Because a tummy tuck is a major procedure, it is not offered or mastered by every board-certified plastic surgeon. It is for this reason, and the patient's safety, that it is crucial you make sure you are receiving a tummy tuck surgery from a qualified plastic surgeon who meets the following criteria:

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



Qualifications

- Is the plastic surgeon board-certified in plastic surgery?
- Has the doctor had fellowship training? The best plastic surgeons have accomplished fellowship training within plastic and reconstructive surgery.
- Does the doctor have experience in reconstruction? As a tummy tuck involves reshaping the abdomen it is beneficial for your doctor to have both aesthetic and reconstructive skills and experience.
- How long has the doctor been in practice?
- How many tummy tuck surgeries have been performed?
- Do they have before and after pictures of tummy tuck surgeries that they can share with you?
- Do they have previous tummy tuck patients you can speak with?

Hospital Privileges

Which hospital is the board-certified plastic surgeon affiliated with? In case of an emergency, it is important that the plastic surgeon is affiliated with a hospital and can continue taking care of you within that hospital. In unfortunate scenarios, some doctors are forced to turn the patient over to the emergency room if there is no relationship with a suitable hospital.

Medical Organization Involvement

Is your plastic surgeon part of an accredited medical organization? Surgeons that are members of medical organizations tend to be more qualified, because such organizations typically require that the surgeon meet stringent qualifications when it comes to being approved as a member.

Dr. Ali is a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), which is recognized by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (the highest governing board in plastic surgery). As a member of the ASPS, Dr. Ali is held accountable for meeting stringent qualifications, including:

- At least 6 years of training and experience in surgery with at least 3 years of plastic surgery experience
- Certification by The American Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
- Operates only in accredited medical facilities
- Adheres to a strict code of ethics
- Fulfills continuing education requirements including patient safety techniques
- Acts as your partner to work with you to achieve your goals

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



The Price of a Tummy Tuck

Cost is always a consideration in elective surgeries, and insurance companies do not generally cover elective, cosmetic surgery. Some health insurance companies will cover a certain percentage of the abdominoplasty procedure if the procedure will correct a pre-existing condition such as a hernia.

It is extremely important that you begin communication between your health insurance company and your plastic surgeon early on and discuss all financial concerns with both parties. The cost of a tummy tuck procedure can vary tremendously, as prices are based on the following:

- The plastic surgeon's experience
- The type of tummy tuck procedure performed
- Hospital or surgical facility costs
- Anesthesia fees
- Post-operative prescriptions
- And more...

Many plastic surgery centers offer financing plans to help patients with the cost, but your satisfaction with the surgery's outcome is worth much more than the initial fees. Be sure to choose a plastic surgeon based on their experience and track record of success, not just the price tag associated with the procedure.

Summary – A Note From Dr. Ali

The choice to have tummy tuck surgery is yours to make, and yours only. While this whitepaper may serve as an introduction to and overview of abdominoplasty, no amount of online research is a substitute for a professional consultation with a plastic surgeon who is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgeons. I hope this introduction to abdominoplasty has better informed you, and perhaps even helped you in making a decision.

If you decide that abdominoplasty is right for you, or are simply considering it, I strongly encourage you to call Amae Plastic Surgery Center in Michigan for an initial consultation. I believe that patient education and realistic expectations are the keys to success with any cosmetic surgical procedure. I will take the time to educate you, understand your goals, and provide you with information and options that will allow you to make the best decisions.

Every patient is different, and requires special attention. The team at Amae Plastic Surgery Center enjoys a top rating at Vitals.com and I have been the plastic surgeon of choice for several other doctors and their families. Our commitment to high quality services and procedures is for the safety and happiness of each and every patient!

Introduction to Tummy Tucks (Abdominoplasty)



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