

Plastic Surgery Unit

Abdominal reduction (tummy tuck)

An abdominal reduction is a procedure to improve the shape of your abdomen by removing extra skin and fat from your lower tummy. It is also called an abdominoplasty or tummy tuck.

Please read this leaflet carefully to make sure you understand the procedure you will be having.

Intended benefits

The aim of an abdominoplasty is to flatten the shape of your abdomen. It is not a method for losing weight. Most patients have already lost weight but are left with loose folds of skin of skin in their abdomen that need correction.

Risks

Abdominoplasty is a commonly performed operation and is generally safe. However, all operations carry some risk.

A general anaesthetic is a sedative usually given as a gas or injection. It makes you unconscious so surgery can be done without causing pain or distress.

Anaesthetics are very safe, but every surgical operation carries a small risk. Before the operation, you will be advised not to eat or drink for several hours. This helps prevent vomiting or choking while you are unconscious.



Patient Information

The surgery usually lasts at least 2 hours.

Possible risks

Scars

All abdominoplasties leave some scarring. Scars are usually red and raised during the first 6 weeks. Over the next 6 months, they usually fade to white. Occasionally, some patients may develop red, lumpy scars that do not improve. The scars are usually covered by normal clothing.

Changes in appearance

Your belly button may look different after surgery. Your pubic hairline may also be slightly higher.

Numbness

The skin of your abdominal may feel numb, but this usually improves after about 6 months. Rarely, numbness can affect the outer thighs and may be permanent.

Seroma and haematoma

In rare cases, fluid (seroma) or blood (haematoma) can collect under the skin, even when drains are used. This may need treatment, sometimes with a needle and syringe or occasionally with a small second operation.

Wound breakdown

Sometimes the wound can become infected or open. Signs of infection include:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Hot or tender skin
- Strong smell from the wound

Patient Information

If you notice any of these signs or are concerned, please contact the department. Rarely, severe infection can cause skin loss, which may require a skin graft.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

There is a risk of DVT, which is a blood that usually forms in a vein in your leg. If the clot travels in your bloodstream to your lungs, it can be serious.

This risk is lower if you start walking as soon as possible after your operation. You will be given special support stockings to wear during surgery and while you are resting in bed.

If a blood clot happens, you may need treatment with blood-thinning medicines for several months.

After your operation

While you are in bed, it is important to keep your knees slightly bent with pillows. This helps reduce tension on your abdomen.

After your surgery, you may have small surgical drains. These are tubes placed under the skin to remove fluid, such as blood and lymph, which can build up after surgery. Drains help prevent swelling and infection.

Drains are usually removed when the fluid collected is less than 30 mL in 24 hours. They will be taken out before you go home, or in some cases, you may go home with the drains in place and have follow-up through a virtual clinic.

Bathing

Keep your dressings clean and dry. These will usually be removed about 10 days after your operation in the outpatients department. At this point, you will be advised when it is safe to bathe.

Patient Information

Avoid lifting and strenuous exercise

Wear a light panty-girdle or Lycra support to reduce tension and increase comfort. Your surgical team will encourage you to start moving from day one. Walk as much as you can but avoid fully straightening your back at first, as this puts tension on your stitches.

As your recovery progresses, it will become easier to straighten your back. Most people are able to return to normal activities by 6 weeks.

Work and driving

You should take at least 4 weeks off work after your operation.

It is also recommended not to drive for 6 weeks after your surgery, as your reactions may be slower in an emergency. Check with your car insurance company before driving. When you do start driving again, begin with short trips and slowly increase the distance.

Contacts

Plastic dressing clinic: Tel 024 7696 6474

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 5289 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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