

CM04 Lite

# Abdominoplasty

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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## What is an abdominoplasty?

An abdominoplasty (or 'tummy tuck') is an operation to improve the appearance of your abdomen. It may involve removing excess skin and fat and tightening your abdominal muscles.

## Is an abdominoplasty suitable for me?

It is common for the skin of your abdomen not to shrink back after pregnancy or losing a lot of weight. You are most likely to benefit from an abdominoplasty if your abdomen makes you feel uncomfortable or you are self-conscious about what your abdomen looks like.

Your surgeon will carry out a detailed assessment before deciding if surgery is suitable for you.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your abdomen should be firmer and have a better shape. If you have excess skin or a gap between your abdominal muscles causing you to feel uncomfortable, this should improve.

## Are there any alternatives to an abdominoplasty?

If your abdomen looks saggy because the muscles of your abdominal wall are slack, your appearance may improve if you follow an exercise programme.

If the problem is caused mainly by too much fat, it may be better to have only liposuction, where the fat is sucked out using a small tube.

## What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes 2 to 5 hours.

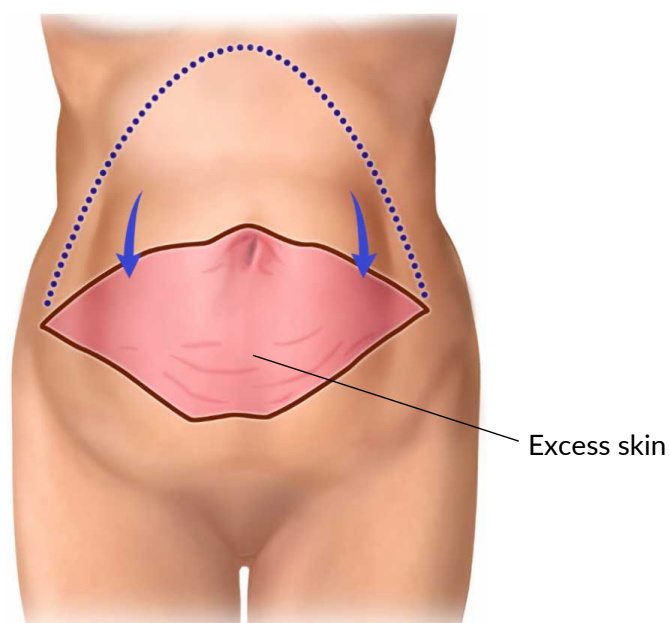
The following are the main techniques that your surgeon may use and they will discuss with you which technique is most appropriate for you.

### Standard abdominoplasty

This technique is suitable if you have a lot of excess skin.

Your surgeon will make a curved cut from one hip to the other, going down to just above your pubic area. They will remove any excess skin and fat between your pubic area and your umbilicus (belly button).

Your surgeon will cut under the skin above your umbilicus, pulling it downwards and tightening it.



A standard abdominoplasty

Sometimes they will need to reconstruct your umbilicus.

Your surgeon may need to tighten the muscles of your abdominal wall.

### Fleur-de-lis abdominoplasty

This technique is suitable if you have a lot of excess skin hanging downwards and around your abdomen. The procedure is similar to a standard abdominoplasty. Your surgeon will also tighten your waist.

### Mini-abdominoplasty

This technique is suitable if you have only a little excess skin. Your surgeon will need to make only a small cut just above the pubic area to remove the excess skin.

### Lower bodylift or belt lipectomy

These techniques are suitable after significant weight loss, usually as a result of bariatric surgery. Your surgeon will remove excess skin and fat from your sides, abdomen and lower back.

## Endoscopic abdominoplasty

This technique is suitable if you only need to have the muscles of your abdominal wall tightened. Your surgeon will make small cuts and use a flexible telescope (endoscope) with surgical instruments to tighten the muscles of your abdominal wall.

## What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

### General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Unsightly scarring of your skin

### Specific complications of this operation

- Developing a collection of blood (haematoma) or fluid (seroma) under the skin in your lower abdomen
- Numbness or continued pain on your abdomen
- Wound-healing problems
- Cosmetic problems

## How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after 2 to 3 days.

You should be able to return to work after 2 weeks, depending on your type of work.

Do not have sex for 3 weeks and then be gentle.

The healthcare team will advise you on exercising to help keep you to a healthy weight and to improve the tone of your abdominal muscles.

The results of an abdominoplasty improve gradually over the first 6 months. The best results for you will happen if you keep to a healthy weight and exercise regularly.

## Summary

An abdominoplasty is an operation to improve the appearance of your abdomen. You should consider the options carefully and have realistic expectations about the results.

**Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.**

### Acknowledgements

Reviewer: Eoin O'Broin (MD, FRCS (Plast.))

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