

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AFTER ABDOMINOPLASTY (TUMMY TUCK)

These instructions are specific to your abdominoplasty procedure. If any information in this guide differs from your general postoperative instructions, please follow the guidelines listed here. If you have questions or concerns at any time during your recovery, please contact our office.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

Following a tummy tuck, it is normal to experience temporary symptoms as your body heals. Common postoperative experiences include:

- Moderate discomfort or tightness, improving with prescribed pain medication
- Swelling and bruising of the abdomen
- Small amounts of blood-tinged drainage on dressings
- Wearing an abdominal binder or compression garment
- Surgical drains (in some cases), which may remain in place for several days

Your surgeon will monitor your recovery closely and guide you through each stage.

ACTIVITY AND POSITIONING

During early recovery, activity should be limited to allow proper healing. Engage in light, slow activity only until advised otherwise. You will need to walk slightly bent (hinged) at the waist for approximately 7–10 days to reduce tension on the incision and protect the abdominal repair.

Do not attempt to stand fully upright immediately. Most patients gradually return to an upright posture during the first week. With assistance, get out of bed and walk at least three times per day to promote circulation and reduce the risk of blood clots. Avoid twisting your torso to prevent strain on sutures.

COMPRESSION GARMENTS

You will be placed in an abdominal binder after surgery and later transitioned into a compression garment. Wear your garment as instructed, typically for about 6 weeks. Compression helps reduce swelling, support healing tissues, and improve comfort.

TEMPERATURE PRECAUTIONS

Avoid applying extreme temperatures to the surgical area. Do not use heating pads, warm compresses, ice packs, or cold compresses on the abdomen. Significant temperature changes may interfere with blood flow and increase the risk of complications.

SHOWERING AND BATHING

You may shower once cleared by your surgeon, typically around 48 hours after surgery. Avoid baths for at least 6–8 weeks. Hot tubs, pools, and whirlpools should also be avoided during this time.

PREVENTING CONSTIPATION

Pain medication, anesthesia, and reduced activity can lead to constipation. To help prevent this:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Walk regularly as tolerated
- Take a stool softener such as Colace® (docusate sodium) 100 mg twice daily, unless instructed otherwise

Contact our office if you have not had a bowel movement within three days after surgery.

SMOKING RESTRICTIONS

Nicotine significantly interferes with healing and increases the risk of complications. Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke exposure for at least 4 weeks after surgery.

DRESSING AND DRAIN CARE

Your dressing type may vary. If you have Sylke tape in place, it should remain undisturbed and will typically be removed between 4–6 weeks, or at your follow-up visit, unless otherwise instructed. If surgical drains are placed, they typically

remain for about 7 days. You will be given instructions on how to care for them, and you may shower with drains in place.

TUMMY TUCK RECOVERY TIMELINE

While each patient heals differently, most follow a general recovery pattern:

FIRST WEEK

Rest and focus on recovery. Short walks—such as to the bathroom and back—are encouraged starting the day of or after surgery. You will remain slightly bent at the waist. Swelling, tightness, and discomfort are normal.

7–10 DAYS POSTOPERATIVE

Continue wearing your binder. Drains are typically removed during this time. Walking regularly is encouraged, and most patients begin standing more upright. Transition to a compression garment may begin.

WEEK 2

Many patients with non-physical jobs return to work. Activity remains limited, and heavy lifting should be avoided.

WEEKS 3–6

Swelling and bruising continue to improve. Light daily activity becomes easier. Lifting is typically limited to 5–10 pounds, and low-impact cardio may begin. A stage 2 garment is worn day and night to reduce swelling.

6 WEEKS TO 3 MONTHS

The stage 2 garment is worn for approximately 12 hours per day. Patients may gradually resume more advanced physical activities.

3-6 MONTHS

Most patients return to full activity, including core exercises such as yoga and Pilates. Swelling continues to improve, and abdominal tightness decreases. Scars are most visible during this phase and begin to fade around 6 months.

6-12 MONTHS

Final results continue to develop as swelling fully resolves. Scars flatten, fade, and soften. Subtle improvements may continue for up to one year.

EXERCISE AFTER ABDOMINOPLASTY

Physical activity should be resumed gradually:

- Walking: immediately encouraged
- Light activity: typically after 3 weeks
- Low-impact exercise: around 3 weeks
- Strenuous exercise: around 6 weeks
- Full activity, including core engagement: around 12 weeks

Always follow your surgeon's recommendations and listen to your body.

WHEN TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE

Please contact our office promptly if you experience:

- Severe pain not relieved by medication
- Significant or uneven swelling, especially if worse on one side
- Increasing bright red bleeding on dressings
- Incisions that appear very red, warm, or that produce pus
- Fever greater than 101°F (38.3°C)
- Any unusual symptoms or concerns

Our team is here to support you throughout your recovery and healing process.