

# Abdominoplasty Information Sheet

## Are you thinking about Abdominoplasty?

If you are considering surgery we want you to be thoroughly informed about this procedure. Reading this information is the first step. However, a personal consultation with Dr. Peterson is the best way to obtain any additional information you need.

## What is Abdominoplasty?

A cosmetic surgery procedure of the abdomen is called an Abdominoplasty or "tummy tuck." It is designed to firm and smooth the abdomen. The procedure removes excess abdominal skin and fat and may tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall. The result is a flatter abdominal profile.

## Is Abdominoplasty for me?

Women and men who have loose abdominal skin and fat at the abdomen can benefit from Abdominoplasty. This condition can be due to weight loss resulting in abdominal skin that is flaccid and stretched. Abdominoplasty also can tighten muscles that are separated and weakened, perhaps by pregnancy. The procedure may also improve the appearance of stretch marks, especially those located below the navel.

Any of the following conditions may make you a good candidate for abdominoplasty:

- Excess or sagging abdominal skin
- An abdomen that protrudes and is out of proportion to the rest of your body
- Abdominal muscles that have been separated and weakened
- Excess fatty tissue that is concentrated in your abdomen

## Initial Consultation

During the initial consultation you may be asked to point out exactly what you would like to see improved. This will help us understand your

expectations and determine whether they can realistically be achieved.

If you plan to become pregnant or to lose weight in the future, you should discuss this, as both have implications for the planning of the operation. Scarring from previous abdominal surgery may limit the results of your Abdominoplasty.

Your skin tone and the degree of loose skin in the abdominal region will be assessed. Dr. Peterson will also evaluate the amount of excess fat in your abdomen and the condition of your abdominal muscles.

Preoperative photographs may be taken during your initial consultation and at subsequent visits. We will discuss with you the details of the operation and the possible risks and complications associated with the procedure.

You will be asked about your medical history including previous operations, as well as past and present medical conditions and medications. In order to provide you with the best information and safest options, it is important that you provide your complete information.

## Preparation for Surgery

The Athena Clinic would like to make your surgical experience as easy and comfortable for you as possible. Smokers will be asked to stop smoking before surgery. Aspirin, some anti-inflammatory medications, and some herbs cause increased bleeding, so you should avoid taking these medications for 2 weeks before surgery and 2 weeks after surgery.

You will have a preoperative visit in the office about two weeks prior to the date of surgery. You will be asked about your medical history including previous operations, past and present medical conditions and medications. In order to provide you with the best information and safest options, it is important that you provide complete information. You may be asked to obtain an EKG prior to your

surgery or have medical clearance from your primary care physician before proceeding with the surgery.

At this visit, instructions will be explained about what to do before and after surgery. You will have an opportunity to ask questions about your surgery, sign consent forms, and complete necessary laboratory work.

Abdominoplasty is performed in our office surgical centre or in the hospital. It is usually an outpatient procedure. You will need to make plans to have someone drive you home after surgery and to stay with you overnight for at least the first night following surgery.

### **The day of Surgery**

You will arrive at The Athena Clinic and be checked in for surgery. This process takes about one hour. Dr. Peterson will meet with you and answer any last minute questions. He will also make markings on your body with a marker and take more pictures. You will meet with the anaesthetist, who will review your medical history and discuss the anaesthesia with you. During the anaesthetic, various monitors are used to check your heart, blood pressure, pulse and the amount of oxygen circulating in your blood. Your anaesthesia during the procedure is administered and monitored by a certified registered nurse anaesthetist (CRNA) or an anaesthesiologist.

You will then go to our in-office operating suite, which is approved by The Joint Commission. If your surgery is in the Hospital operating room, you will meet your anaesthetist in the hospital just prior to the procedure. The surgical team will prepare you for the surgery by washing the surgical area. It can be cold in the operating room, however we will provide plenty of blankets and you may want to bring socks. The anaesthetist will begin the intravenous (IV) sedation and administer antibiotics intravenously to minimize the chance of infection. Dr. Peterson will then begin the surgery once you are comfortable.

### **Your Operation**

Because of individual factors, not everyone will achieve the same results from abdominoplasty. Dr. Peterson will select the surgical technique that he

feels will obtain the best outcome for you. Incision lines will fade over time but will be permanently visible. Abdominoplasty incisions can usually be placed in locations concealed by bathing suits and undergarments.

Abdominoplasty can be combined with other procedures, such as liposuction of the hips, flanks and/ or thighs. Individual factors and personal preferences will determine the specific technique selected to smooth and flatten your abdomen. Some patients request breast surgery at the same time. Breast surgery and lipoplasty may or may not be able to be planned on the same surgery day as the Abdominoplasty.

### **Where will the incisions be?**

Generally, a horizontal incision is placed just within or above the pubic area. The length of the incision, which extends outwards toward the pelvic bones, depends mainly on the amount of skin to be removed. The exact incision will vary according to the shape of your abdomen and the underwear style that you prefer.

Skin of the lower abdomen that contains stretch marks may be removed as well. Any remaining stretch marks may be flattened and improved, but you should not expect a dramatic change in their appearance. The procedure may include tightening of the underlying abdominal muscles using sutures. The final position of the navel remains unchanged

### **How long does the operation take?**

The operation takes from 1 to 4 hours, depending on the extent of each case.

### **After Surgery**

When surgery is completed, you will be taken into a recovery area where you will continue to be closely monitored. You will spend about an hour in the recovery room before going home. You will not be discharged to go home until you are no longer very drowsy.

Because the surgical area is infiltrated with long-lasting local anaesthetic, you may have little or no pain when you wake up. As the anaesthetic wears off, some discomfort may be present. We provide a prescription for oral pain medicine to be used after

your surgery in case you need it. If you have post-operative pain, it usually diminishes over several days. It is important to realize that the amount of time it takes for recovery varies greatly among individuals. You will want to bring cloths that are comfortable and easy to put on after surgery

### **How will I look and feel initially?**

You will have a firm abdominal bandage or a compression garment, which you will keep on until you see Dr. Peterson the next day. You may need to wear an abdominal bandage or compression garment for a few weeks after surgery. You will have drains inserted during the procedure that will need to be cared for until they are removed about a week after surgery.

It is very important that you get out of bed and walk as soon as possible after the operation to minimize the chance of clots forming in your leg veins. Although we ask that you do not stand completely straight for the first week, it is best that you do not sit for long periods of time during the first several days.

Straining, bending and lifting must be avoided, since these activities might cause increased swelling or even bleeding. You will be instructed to sleep on your back at a 45 degree angle with a pillow under your knees. Although you will find that mobilization is a little slow at first, you should expect to be walking normally within a week after surgery.

It is important to realize that the amount of time it takes for recovery varies greatly among individuals and also depends on the extent of the operation. You will notice swelling and possibly bruising, which is to be expected. The bruising and much of the swelling will disappear over a period of weeks. However, it may be months before all swelling subsides and you see the final result of your abdominoplasty. You may also notice some numbness over portions of the abdominal area, and this may persist for several months. Incisions will initially be red or pink in colour. They will remain this way for many months following surgery and may even appear to worsen before they finally begin to fade.

### **When can I resume my normal activities?**

You may be able to return to light work anywhere from one to three weeks after surgery. In many instances, you can resume most of your normal activities, including some form of mild exercise, after a few weeks. You may continue to experience some mild, periodic discomfort and swelling during this time, but such feelings are normal. Severe pain should be reported to our office and evaluated by Dr. Peterson. Your specific activities can be discussed at your pre-operative visit and during your follow up visits.

### **Results of your Surgery**

Since the healing process is gradual, you should expect to wait at least several weeks to get an accurate picture of the results of your surgery. Incisions will fade over a number of months. Unless you gain or lose a significant amount of weight or become pregnant, your abdomen should remain firmer and flatter for many years. However, gravity and the effects of ageing may impact your skin and tissue over time. If, after a period of years, you become dissatisfied with the appearance of your abdomen, you may choose to undergo a second procedure to restore a more youthful body contour.

### **Risks and possible complications of Surgery**

Fortunately, significant complications from abdominoplasty surgery are infrequent. Every year, many thousands of operations are performed with no major problems and with good results. However, everyone considering surgery should be aware of both the benefits and risks. The subject of risks and potential complications of surgery is best discussed on a personal level between you and Dr. Peterson.

- There may be bruising after surgery. This usually settles after approximately 2 weeks
- Wound infection may be a complication after the operation. The infection is usually treated with antibiotics, oral or intravenous antibiotics, depending on its severity.

- Dehiscence or reopening of the wound may occur. This usually happens as a result of infection and is managed by treating the infection.
- Collection of blood or fluid under the operated skin can occur. The drains will help to minimize this complication; however accumulation of either may require additional surgery.
- Skin loss occurs in a very small percentage of abdominoplasties. This complication is more common in smokers and it is therefore very important that you stop smoking. Skin loss is also more common in medical conditions such as diabetes.
- Skin loss may occur at the belly button
- Wide or irregular scars may occur due to the tension on the tissues after surgery. Reversionary surgery is sometimes helpful in certain instances where incisions may have healed poorly
- There may be numbness in the lower part of your abdominal skin after surgery. This usually recovers with time.
- Because of tension on the pubic skin, the pubic hairline may be elevated after surgery.
- Clots in the legs may form and resultant clots travelling to the lungs have also been reported although this complication is very uncommon.

You can help to minimize certain risks by following the advice and instructions of Dr. Peterson.

### **Maintaining a relationship with your Plastic Surgeon**

Should there be any questions regarding Abdominoplasty; be sure to voice your concerns to Dr. Peterson. Before proceeding with the operation, consider your options and feel comfortable with your decision.

After surgery, you will return to The Athena Clinic for follow-up care at prescribed intervals, at which time your progress can be evaluated. Once the immediate postoperative follow-up is complete, we encourage our patients to come back for periodic check-ups to observe and discuss the long-term results of surgery.

Please remember that the relationship with your plastic surgeon does not end when you leave the operating room. Post-operative and follow up visits are very important. If you have questions or concerns during your recovery, or any time, please contact us.