

Abdominoplasty

Post operative instructions

Before your operation

- Organise for a responsible adult to accompany you home after your operation and stay with you for the full 24 hours after your surgery
- Plan to have approximately two weeks off work
- Pack and bring to the hospital:
 - A loose fitting, button up shirt to wear when going home, so you don't have to lift your arms above your head
 - Your post operative garment

What to expect immediately after surgery

After surgery your abdomen will be swollen and tender, moderate pain can be expected for about two days. You are likely to stay in hospital for up to four days, following this, please arrange for someone to be with you at home for the first few days.

Your post operative garment will be put on after the operation and is to be worn at all times for up to six weeks. If a drain tube is inserted it will be removed within 2 to 10 days.

Everyone recovers from their anaesthetic differently; but post operative nausea is a common side effect following general anaesthesia. If you are experiencing nausea we recommend eating light, small meals throughout the day. If nausea or vomiting is severe, please contact us.

What to expect the first week post surgery

Constipation: Constipation is common following a general anaesthetic. To avoid constipation, ensure you drink plenty of fluids and foods containing fibre. If necessary, we recommend a gentle, laxative drink such as Movicol. This can be purchased from your chemist.

Pain relief: The majority of patients will experience mild pain following surgery and it is also normal to feel tightness. Maximum discomfort will occur during the first few days, but pain should be manageable and will slowly ease over the course of your recovery. Your anaesthetist may provide you with pain medication, to be taken as directed.

If you have not been given a prescription, we recommend the use of Panadol or Panadol extra to manage any discomfort. Do not take aspirin for at least 10 days following surgery as this can increase the risk of bleeding.

If your pain is severe and does not subside with pain medication, please contact us.

Dressings: If you have a waterproof dressing you can shower during this first week. Otherwise, please keep the dressing dry and in place until your first post operative appointment. Your incisions will seep some fluid and blood for a short time following surgery, when you can keep clean by sponging or bathing.

Sleeping: You can sleep in whichever position that you are comfortable in, however, it is important that your hips are bent and your abdominal muscles are not being stretched – you can achieve this by:

- having 1-2 pillows under your knees or
- having 3-4 pillows stacked behind your head and back or
- sleeping in a reclining chair with your head and legs up

If you sleep on your side, check that your knees and hips are bent.

Driving: Do not drive or operate machinery for 24 hours post surgery. You can drive when your wound and/or pain medication no longer impedes your functionality.

Sensation: At first, some numbness of the skin is to be expected, especially in the lower-central tummy area and sometimes in the upper thighs.

Swelling: Swelling reaches its peak at 48-72 hours after surgery. Some patients have swelling and bruising that tracks all the way down into their genital areas. Bruising can be a range of colours from dark purple, green to yellow. Give your body at least 2 weeks for the bruises to start fading and 3 months for the swelling to disappear. The shape, size and appearance of your tummy can take up to 3-6 months to settle.

Exercise: It is not unusual to walk 'bent-over' after the operation. It can take up to 4 weeks for you to comfortably straighten your back.

Small, short walks around the house are encouraged to prevent clots in the legs, gradually increase your daily activity as the weeks go by.

Avoid the following:

- bending over
- lifting (anything over 1 kg)
- pushing, pulling or straining for at least 6 weeks

You can move body in all directions – it won't tear anything as long as the movements are within your comfortable range. Be careful with any sudden or straining movements, as this can result in sharp stabbing or pulling pain

Removal of sutures: We will normally remove sutures at your first post operative review. If absorbable sutures have been used, removal will not be necessary.

Recovery after the first week

Scar Management: Abdominoplasty scars will generally be slightly red for a few months and then begin to fade. On your second post operative visit you will be advised on the most effective scar management options to ensure you have the best possible outcome.

Smoking: We recommend you do not smoke for at least 3-4 weeks following your operation as smoking impedes blood flow to the skin and increases healing time.

Alcohol: Alcohol can increase post-operative bleeding and can be dangerous in combination with your pain medication. Do not drink alcohol until you have finished taking all pain medication.

Contact us if you develop:

- A fever or become unwell
- Nausea and vomiting which persists after 48 hours
- Spreading redness/rash over the operative area or suture lines
- Fluid build up in your abdomen or sudden swelling in the area
- Pain which is not relieved or controlled by your pain-killers
- Have sudden copious discharge of fluid or oozing from your wounds
- For after hours emergencies or if you are unable to contact the office, visit your local GP or emergency room.