

# Abdominoplasty Surgery Consent Information

This information will help you to understand the risks and complications associated with Abdominoplasty Surgery. Although modern surgery is safe it still entails some risk. Please take time to read this information on risks and complications both general and specific to your procedure. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any area further. These risks are controlled and minimized with specialist care before, during and after your surgery by:

- Pre-operative consultation with Dr Somia and selective testing to ensure you are fit for surgery.
- Hospitals with a high safety record and stringent quality controls
- Highly trained anaesthetists (Dr Simon Koh and Dr Suzi Miles) to administer the appropriate drugs and dosage.

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## 2 **General Risks**

Pneumonia, deep venous thrombosis, pulmonary embolism, stroke, heart attack, allergies, awareness, death

## 3 **Specific Risks During Surgery**

Bleeding, Damage to deeper structures, Liposuction wetting solutions

## 4 **Specific Risks - Short Term**

Bleeding, Infection, Sensation Change, Haematoma and seroma, Skin contour irregularities, Firmness, Delayed healing and tissue death, Exposed sutures, Dog ears and additional skin folds, Umbilical appearance, Dressings

## **Specific Risks - Long Term**

- 6 Asymmetry, Scars, Pubic distortion, Lymphoedema, Changes in size and shape, Unsatisfactory result



**All surgery carries risk due to the use of drugs, sedation or anaesthesia. Risks involved include (but are not limited to):-**

## **Post operative pneumonia and areas of lung collapse**

When you are under anaesthetic you breathe more shallowly than normal. This can allow some areas of your lungs to partially collapse. If these areas are not inflated again soon after you wake up, this can lead to pneumonia or lung infection. Smokers/vapers are at higher risk as the waste products clog the airways and damage the airway lining preventing cleaning of the mucous secretions. Our anaesthetists carefully monitor how deeply you are breathing during the operation to prevent this. This is one of the reasons we insist all patients abstain from smoking/vaping for 12 weeks before and after.

## **Deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism**

Your legs rely on gentle constant muscle activity to propel blood back towards the heart. If the blood stays stagnant it can clot in the leg veins and later dislodge and end up in your lungs. When you are asleep you generally move around enough to keep the blood moving. When you are anaesthetised your legs do not move at all. Instead compression stockings are applied to collapse the veins and sequential compression devices applied to massage the blood back to the heart. (intermittent compression also releases a natural anti-clotting agent). If you experience irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath or chest pain after your return home you should go to hospital.

## **Stroke and Heart Attack**

These are very rare complications in otherwise fit and healthy patients. Elderly patients are at a greater risk. If we believe you are at increased risk we will discuss this with our anaesthetists prior to surgery and may arrange additional tests to ensure your safety in the operating room.



## Allergies

During your medical history, you will be asked if you are aware of having any drug allergies. This will be repeated by your anaesthetist. During the administration of any drug there is a small risk of allergy. Reactions can be mild itchiness to severe anaphylaxis requiring adrenaline. Some allergies can be predicted, but most are random events that are only discovered once they occur. Should an allergy occur it will be treated immediately and you will be notified at the end of the operation.

## Awareness

Most patients give away signs such as increased blood pressure or heart rate that will alert anaesthetists that they are feeling pain. Modern monitoring will alert anaesthetists that patients are not asleep earlier than heart rate and blood pressure indicators.

## Death

Risk of death under anaesthesia in Australia is around 1 in 4 million cases. Your level of health prior the surgery will relate to your personal risk. In general, you are more likely to have an accident travelling to and from the hospital.

# Specific Risks During Surgery

## Bleeding

There is always some bleeding with abdominoplasty. We aim to minimize this by infiltrating local anaesthetic with adrenaline into the operating site before the operation. It is exceptionally rare for the bleeding to be significant enough to require a blood transfusion (with its attendant risks). However, it is prudent to ensure that your haemoglobin levels are well stocked before the operation with a diet high in iron and vitamins for about a month before surgery. Doing this will mean you are less likely to feel washed out after the operation.



## Damage to deeper structures

During any operation there is always a risk of damage to surrounding structures. Abdominoplasty surgery is performed mostly between planes of tissues, like layers in an onion, so the risk of going a layer too deep is quite small. However, there have been reports in the literature of damage to structures in the abdominal wall and cavity. This is much more likely if you have a hernia known or unknown before surgery.

## Liposuction wetting solutions

The local anaesthetic and adrenaline solution used to facilitate safe liposuction can be absorbed into the blood system and contribute to fluid overload. This rare situation requires additional medical treatment and hospitalisation.

## Specific Risks - Short Term

### Bleeding

There will be a small amount of bleeding or red discharge from your wounds in the first few days after your operation. Large amounts of bleeding should be treated by keeping calm (to lower your heart rate and blood pressure) using ice packs (to shrink the blood vessels) and applying constant gentle pressure to the area. If the bleeding does not stop within 20-30 minutes, you should call the rooms or go to the hospital. If an increase in bleeding is noticed at the same time as an increase in pain, you may be developing a haematoma (blood clot) and should contact the rooms or the hospital. Very rarely, bleeding after surgery requires a visit back to the operating room to drain the collected blood and control any bleeding vessels.

### Infection

Infection is uncommon after elective plastic surgery. You will be given antibiotics through the drip during the operation and if there are any abnormalities noted during the operation, you will be sent home with tablet antibiotics for a week after the operation. Should an infection develop, it would usually begin at about the 5th to 10th post-operative day (around about the time that you are due to see us for removal of sutures and dressings). If you notice increasing pain, swelling and redness of the area that was operated on, please call the office or the hospital.



## **Sensation change**

Changes in sensation in the lower abdomen are impossible to predict. Most have a temporary decrease in sensation that returns to normal within a few weeks. It is uncommon to have long term numbness. As sensation returns to an area it is usual to experience some tenderness and itchiness.

## **Haematoma and seroma**

Any operation in which there is a large surface area that is operated on runs the risk of having blood or fluid collect in the space left behind as it heals. We place surgical drains to prevent these collections of fluid, but they will occasionally arise after the drains have been removed or collect in an area that does not flow to the surgical drain. For this reason it is important to maintain constant pressure on the operated area (compression garment) to help prevent this from happening and assist the abdominal fat in healing down to the muscle layer. Should a fluid collection occur it can be removed either with a needle aspiration, or occasionally another drain can be placed under ultrasound guidance.

## **Skin Contour Irregularities**

Any operation that uses liposuction as a step in the process of thinning fat layers runs the risk of some contour irregularities. These usually settle within a few weeks, and are assisted by wearing compression garments. Massage after a few weeks can also help smooth out small irregularities.

## **Dressings**

Dressings need to remain in place until your first post operative check with your surgeon. You should expect that they could become warm and have a small amount of pressure. Occasionally, dressings can cause some irritation, and rarely cause allergic reactions. Should the dressings become unbearable or cause increasing redness and swelling, please call the office to arrange for them to be changed.

## **Firmness**

After any operation, as tissues heal there is some swelling/firmness. The majority will resolve within 6 weeks, but the last small amounts can take up to a year to completely resolve. At one month after your operation, some gentle tissue massage will help the recovery of the tissues. Occasionally, there will be patches of fat that has not survived the operation (fat necrosis) that become hard and need to be removed.



## Exposed sutures

Many sutures (both permanent and dissolving) that are used to reshape tissues are buried within the soft tissues. Occasionally, these sutures will show themselves through the skin. If they become problematic, they may need to be removed. This is usually something that can be done in the office.

## Delayed Healing & Tissue death

The expected time frame of healing within is; skin should heal within a week and soft tissues around about 6 weeks. Diabetics, smokers/vapers and people with some other diseases will have the risk that their tissues will take longer to heal and may have some tissue death before healing. Operations with more aggressive liposuction and tight closure also predispose to increased healing stress, and therefore more risk of wound problems. Most of these problems can be managed with appropriate dressings but may need additional surgery.

## Dog ears or additional skin folds

Depending on the technique utilised, as compared to the skin excess in all dimensions, there may be some excess skin folds at the end of your operation. These generally improve with time, but if they persist for longer than 4 months a touch up procedure may be required.

## Umbilical appearance

The position of the umbilicus (navel or belly button) is fairly standard across most people, but your abdomens' healing after the operation is not always predictable. As a result, the position and appearance of your umbilicus may change from the time of the operation during healing. Very rarely the umbilicus may completely necrose (die) and scar up. These problems can be improved with additional surgery.

# Specific Risks - Long Term

## Asymmetry

Small asymmetries should be expected. As the swelling subsides over the first 6-12 months, there will be different parts of your operation that you are more or less happy with. You should allow at least 6 months to settle out minor asymmetries. Major asymmetries will be adjusted by your surgeon.



## Scars

Depending on your needs your surgeon will suggest a technique (or pattern) they believe will provide you with the results you are after. This is not a hard and fast rule and there is some room for discussion taking into consideration the importance that you place on length and position of scars, as opposed to abdominal shape and the need for further touch up procedures. Even in techniques with longer scars, the majority of the scars will fall in natural skin lines, and will heal to become not very noticeable over the course of 6-12 months. Problem scars are uncommon after abdominoplasty.

## Public Distortion

As the tissues heal there may be some pull or distortion on the pubic area, and this distortion may reach as low as the labia majora in rare cases. This is an unusual complication and extra surgery may be required to adjust the soft tissues.

## Lymphoedema

This is a complication in which there is persistent swelling after the operation due to the disruption of the normal channels that drain extra fluid from the tissues. It is uncommon after abdominoplasty.

## Changes in size and shape

As abdominoplasty surgery reshapes normal tissues, any weight gain or loss will be reflected in the size and shape of your abdomen. Because of this, we ask that your weight be fairly stable for about 6 months (or 2 years post bariatric surgery) prior to undergoing this operation to ensure that your results will last as long as possible.

## Unsatisfactory Result

Your pre-operative consultations should help you realize the objectives and limitations of your operation. If you are unhappy with your result, you should wait for the swelling to settle before making a final judgment. Should the result still not be up to expectation by 6 months we can discuss further surgery.

## Questions

If you would like clarification on any of the information here please contact the office.

