



# ABDOMINOPLASTY

## Q&A WITH DR. MURRAY BEAGLEY

Many people desire a slimmer and sculpted abdominal area following the effects of either weight loss, pregnancies or generalised loss of tone in the abdominal region. An abdominoplasty (or tummy tuck) deals with excess skin and lax musculature definitively to create a smoother, firmer abdominal profile and allows the restoration of a more youthful and aesthetic midsection.

### WHAT IS A TUMMY TUCK?

A tummy tuck is a major surgical procedure which involves circumferential tightening of the abdominal muscles and removal of the lower abdominal skin with re-positioning of the umbilicus to provide a more contoured and youthful truncal profile. Liposuction of resistant fatty deposits is often an adjunct to tummy tuck surgery.

### AM I A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR ABDOMINOPLASTY?

The ideal candidate for abdominoplasty is someone who has a saggy or protruding abdomen as a result of weight loss or pregnancies where the skin has previously been stretched and has failed to recoil satisfactorily. The underlying paired rectus abdominus muscles (the "six-pack") may have separated and weakened particularly during pregnancies contributing to laxity in this area. An excess of skin and fat can be resistant to diet and exercise programmes and requires surgical treatment to provide a definitive result. One must be committed to a stable diet and regular exercise after surgery in order to maintain the results.

### WHAT WILL THE CONSULTATION INVOLVE?

Your first consultation will be half an hour long in order that a full assessment and discussion can take place within a relaxed time frame. Be prepared to discuss your reasons for wanting the surgery which may include any of the following; discontent with the appearance of your abdomen, excess skin and fat which won't budge despite rigorous exercise and dietary measures, difficulty with clothes fitting and in severe cases, rashes under a fold of redundant tissue (apron or pannus). A full medical and surgical history is obtained with particular reference to weight changes, exercise regimes and previous abdominal surgery. An abdominal exam then takes place assessing for scars, herniae (bulges), quality of the musculature and degree of laxity of the tissues. Photographs are usually

taken at this consultation. I encourage a second pre-operative consultation to discuss any further questions which may arise.

### WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE OPERATION?

In effect, the operation involves a dual reduction of the midsection. One component of this is the vertical reduction of tissue that occurs when the skin and fat is removed between the umbilicus and the upper pubic region. Secondly, the paired "six-pack" muscles are sutured together and tightened like an internal corset which effects a circumferential reduction both narrowing the waistline and improving the contours of the midriff. Surgery begins with an incision in the lower abdomen

*'tightening of the abdominal muscles and resection of the lower abdominal skin to provide a more contoured and youthful truncal profile.'*

extending from hip to hip at the level of the belt line passing down from the hips to just above the pubic hair line centrally. A large flap is then raised by undermining up to the level of the ribcage. This not only allows mobilisation and advancement of the flap, but also provides full exposure of the abdominal musculature. As this flap is being raised, an incision is made around the umbilicus which is then carefully dissected free from the abdominal flap leaving the stalk (with its blood supply) attached to the abdominal wall. The "six-pack" muscles are then plicated (tightened together) and the skin flap advanced downward over the top of the lower incision. This enables precise assessment of the amount of skin to be removed in order that an individual tailored result is achieved. As this wound is being closed, the umbilical stalk is retrieved and delivered through a new incision in the abdominal skin flap (umbilicoplasty). Final closure is with absorbable staples to the deep layer and a dissolving suture just beneath the skin.

### WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER THE OPERATION?

Your drains and catheter are usually removed the morning following your surgery after which you will be encouraged to mobilise around your bed and the ward. Depending on your home circumstances, I generally recommend two nights in hospital following abdominoplasty. You may not be able to stand up straight initially and when resting or sleeping may feel more comfortable lying down

with a pillow under your knees. I request that you take things very quietly as you recuperate and suggest you plan for a fortnight of recumbence; reading, watching DVDs or listening to music. You should anticipate two to four weeks off work depending on the nature of your job. Some swelling and bruising is expected in the first few weeks and it will take several months for the swelling to completely subside and the final aesthetic result to fully evolve. There will be areas of numbness of your lower abdomen during this time. Scar maturation does not occur for a full two years from the time of surgery. When healing is complete you will enjoy a firmer, toned midriff and improved posture due to the tightening of the abdominal musculature. Your scar should be

able to be concealed beneath underwear and some two piece swimsuits.

Most patients report greater self confidence and a much wider range of wardrobe options from which to choose following successful surgery.

### WHY SHOULD I ASK FOR A PLASTIC SURGEON TO DO MY OPERATION ?

A fully qualified Plastic Surgeon will have undergone many years of supervised surgical training under the scrutiny of senior plastic surgeons. Many Plastic Surgeons focus their practice on cosmetic surgery and have had higher training in this sub-specialty area of expertise.

Those surgeons who have a passion for this area of surgery can be elected to membership in various organisations such as the New Zealand Foundation for Cosmetic Plastic Surgery, ASAPS (Australasian Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery) and ISAPS (International Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery). Prerequisite qualifications for membership to these groups include a formal plastic surgery degree such as FRACS (Plast.), overseas Fellowship training in aesthetic surgery and a significant component of cosmetic surgery in their day to day practice.

When selecting a surgeon for a tummy tuck please ensure that they have the appropriate training and credentials and that they have a dedicated interest in cosmetic plastic surgery. Check their website gallery for proven results and testimonials from patients. 

Dr. Murray Beagley is a Remuera based Cosmetic Surgeon with a formal Fellowship in Plastic Surgery from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, FRACS (Plast.)

He is a Member of The New Zealand Foundation for Cosmetic Plastic Surgery and both the Australasian and International Societies for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

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# Tummy Tuck

Whether you are motivated by health-related reasons, or just want to look and feel great after having children, there are many benefits to getting rid of excess abdominal skin and fat. An abdominoplasty is a major procedure, but it can get major results – giving you better posture, increasing self-esteem and of course more wardrobe options!

## Patient Profile

Helen (not her real name), a 38-year-old Health Professional and mother of three, recently underwent a tummy tuck operation by Dr. Murray Beagley. She shares her tummy tuck experience with Beautiful You, her concerns before surgery, and her relatively easy recovery period. She gives some great advice prior to going through tummy tuck surgery, and shares how the amazing results post-operation (including the significant boost in her self-esteem) have made this operation even more worthwhile.

### WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GET A TUMMY TUCK?

I made my decision to have surgery after three pregnancies. I had a significant amount of loose skin and fat around my midriff. I could not refit my regular size clothing and often had to dress around this area which was not an issue pre-pregnancy. Because my work environment involves lifting people for assessment, I was experiencing significant lower back pain and discomfort due to lack of stomach and muscle support. I also followed a close girlfriend's experience and positive outcome of a tummy tuck. She looked great, and I was finding that my confidence and self esteem around feeling good about my body was very low, especially around seeing and touching my tummy area. I have no desire to have any other surgery, and am still happy with my wrinkles and bits of grey hair at 38 years old.

### HOW DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON? WHAT WAS THE CONSULTATION PROCESS LIKE?

The recommendation for Murray came from a work colleague and friend who has had the benefit of observing a number of plastic surgeons operating in Auckland. After discussing my concerns of scar management, she recommended him as her pick. The consultation was factual and informative in terms of what outcomes to expect. I felt that all my questions were well answered and acknowledged as important.

### DID YOU HAVE TO LOSE WEIGHT PRIOR TO SURGERY?

Prior to surgery I did lose approximately three kilos. This wasn't a requirement from the doctor but I wanted to optimise the best outcome of both the surgery and liposuction. I also know that it has beneficial impact on how well you recover by being in the best shape possible.

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR SURGERY?

I was able to contact a previous client who 'painted the picture' of what to expect after surgery. I was concerned with how I was going to cope with three children – one being a toddler and having restricted ability to pick him up. It was good to get a realistic day to day picture – this didn't vary much from the information which both Murray and his nurse had provided me. I found the entire process very easy to follow, and all the resources were available to me. Both the pre-op and post-op follow-up visits have addressed all my queries or concerns such as scar management and settling down of the scar.

### DID YOU EXPERIENCE MUCH PAIN OR DISCOMFORT AFTER SURGERY? HOW WAS THE RECOVERY PERIOD AND HOW LONG DID IT TAKE?

Due to good pain management at the hospital and internal pain relief, I can honestly say that the pain was moderate directly after the surgery, and after that I did not experience pain. Discomfort would be more the description, and this was only when I over-extended myself. Murray recommended a specific support garment that was superb and well worth the hassle of wearing. It gave both postural and scar support, which was invaluable. The recovery is definitely six to eight weeks if you have an active lifestyle, children, or play sports. However, if I had a purely office role I feel that I could have been back at work within three weeks. For me, I did take the six to eight weeks. I had the full tummy tuck including muscular restitching and I did not want to put this under pressure too early. But I was never in pain; I only had post-surgery fatigue due to the medication and anesthetic.

### ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE RESULTS? HOW HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED SINCE THE ABDOMINOPLASTY?

As above, I don't have any desire to modify any other part of my body. I am delighted with the result as it has improved my posture greatly when I stand upright. I seem to have my bust back too, as I am not as hunched over and aware of my 'hanging' tummy – 'the apron'. I do not have lower back pain anymore, even when carrying my three-year old around. And I have started running again and feel great. I am looking forward to summer this year, and have to 'rethink' that I can bend over, wear a bikini, etc. as I don't have the issues I did last summer. I have no regrets about having the surgery and am very pleased that I did this now rather than waiting until later in life, or in fact not doing it at all.

### WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO WOMEN WHO ARE THINKING OF GOING THROUGH ABDOMINOPLASTY?

Research, get recommendations from people who have used the plastic surgeon, see their work, get support ready at home, meals, house work, get the right support garment – go for the customized – it's worth the extra expense. Take it quietly after the surgery, it is a major operation. Ask questions at any time, and be at ease with your surgeon and support staff.

### ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR SURGERY, EXPERIENCE, AND RESULTS?

I am very grateful that the whole process has been very positive – a great outcome. I have had no hiccups along the way. I was prepared for a 'worse' case scenario and was very surprised at how well I was post-op during the hospital stay and early at home. I have found the interactions with Murray and his team very professional, informative and would have no concerns recommending him to others. 🙌

