

Recovery after your hospital stay

It is helpful to have someone stay with you for the first few days after you go home from hospital as you may have difficulty with normal mobility. Although initially walking will be uncomfortable it is important to stay active to reduce the risk of clots in the legs. You will be given a pair of antithrombotic stockings when you arrive at hospital and you should continue to wear these at home until you are back to your normal level of activity.



You can return to normal activities and work as directed by your surgeon. However, most patients should plan on having about 2 – 4 weeks off work. You should avoid any heavy lifting or straining for 6 weeks.

Smoking should be avoided for at least 2 weeks after surgery as it impairs wound healing.

Like any scar, the incision will be slightly red for a few months until it matures to what should be a faded fine white line.



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Plastic & Cosmetic Surgery at
Westmead Private Hospital

Post-operative Care & Recovery after Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty) & Body Lift



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Your surgery

The length of time for your surgery may vary dependant on the type of procedure you are having. For this specific procedure plus or minus breast surgery, you are looking at possibly up to a 10 hour procedure followed by a hospital stay of anywhere from 3 – 7 days. Your body will require a minimum of 4 weeks to recover from the procedure and may take up to 6 months before you reach your desired look and feel.

What to expect post-operatively

Pain and discomfort is normal after your procedure and will vary individually. The nursing staff will administer pain relief to you as charted by your anaesthetist, please inform the nursing staff or contact our plastics patient liaison nurse directly if the pain relief you are receiving is not adequately controlling your pain; pain will subside as your healing progresses.

The surgery will result in some swelling and bruising, this should start to settle after a few days or even a week. The nursing staff will be monitoring your wounds and will only change any dressings as specified by your surgeon.

All stitches used will be internal and dissolving except the umbilical sutures. These will be removed prior to your discharge.

All surgery results in some swelling and bruising but this will resolve after a couple of weeks. The nursing staff will be monitoring your wounds and will only change any dressings as specified by the surgeon.

Drain tubes are inserted at the end of the operation to allow for any bodily fluid to escape from your body post-operatively. These are usually removed once there has been less than 20mls of fluid in a 24 hour period; this will also vary individually.



If your drainage is more than 20mls at the end of your stay then you need to be discharged with them, the nurses will educate you on how to care for the drains and will provide you with a booklet to take home.

When you return from surgery you will either already be fitted in your compression garment (abdominal binder) or you will be fitted shortly after and you will be required to wear this garment for approximately 6 weeks. This will cover the incision across your lower abdomen. Some surgeons allow you to take the garment off for periods of rest, please ensure you firstly check with your surgeon.

Nursing care post-operatively

Our team of experienced nursing staff will be helping you with your daily activities, they are there to guide and assist you when you return from your surgery and educate you on how to look after yourself at home following discharge. Please ask the nursing staff if there is anything we can do for you as nothing is too great or too small. The nursing team will be liaising regularly with your doctor and will follow a specifically designed clinical pathway for your individual surgery. The nurses will go through your daily activities and ensure you are reaching your goals.

For the first 36-48 hours you will be on bed rest with pillows under your knees to ensure your knees and hips are flexed to assist with healing and closure of the wound, see picture below. You will also be on an air mattress to protect your skin from any bed sores and you will have calf compressors on your calves, these pump your calf muscles intermittently to make sure that the blood efficiently returns back up to the heart and not pool and cause a deep vein thrombosis. All these measures are put in place to ensure your safety and reduce the risk of any post-operative complications.

You will be visited by a physiotherapist the day after your surgery to teach you some breathing exercises and they will also teach you how to move in and out of bed correctly.

You will be able to have a full shower on your second or third day in hospital. Prior to this the nurses will assist in giving you a thorough wash in your bed each day.

We have a dedicated plastics patient liaison nurse on each shift who can be contacted directly on the personal desk phone throughout your stay if you have any concerns, questions or require assistance.

The number for the plastics patient liaison nurse is (02) 8837 8988, you will be given a business card and the number will be written on the whiteboard in your room.

