

# Tummy toning after pregnancy - what are your options?



The abdominal muscles perform an incredible job during pregnancy, stretching as the baby grows, holding the protective womb in place during gestation. Some people's muscles return to their original size and position soon after birth, some do not. For others, they feel their bodies are never the same again. We talk to Plastic Surgeon, Mr Adam Bialostocki of Bay Plastic Surgery at the Da Vinci Clinic, about options for regaining pre-pregnancy shape.

**Why is extra weight and loose skin carried around the abdominal area, post-pregnancy?** Most people gain weight during pregnancy; some return to their original weight quickly, while others may find it more difficult. Diet and exercise is recommended to address weight issues, but for some people, the main concerns they have post-pregnancy is the change in their shape. During pregnancy muscles displace and stretch, as does skin which is an amazingly 'elastic' organ. However, if women are left with loose skin post-pregnancy and lack of muscle tone which will not respond to diet and exercise, there are a variety of procedures which can help address these concerns.

**Why is it difficult to return to pre-pregnancy shape for some people, and not others?** Some women may experience 'damage' to their skin, commonly referred to as 'stretch marks', and a loss of elasticity. It is not uncommon to experience separation of the rectus muscles ("6-pack") allowing a midline

bulge. For some women - regardless of their pre-pregnancy shape, fitness and skin tone - no amount of exercise will restore them to their original position.

**How long should I wait until I seek help for addressing my loose skin, post-pregnancy?** How soon is too soon? Generally, once full regression of the skin stretch has occurred, which is at approximately three months post-partum, we can begin to see areas which may benefit from surgical procedures. Some women take longer for their bodies to 'settle', with changes associated with breast-feeding noticeable too.

**Who should I consult to determine the best options to address my post-pregnancy concerns?** A Plastic Surgeon is able to provide you with a comprehensive overview regarding the best options for restoring your shape. Abdominoplasty is a popular re-shaping operation perfect for addressing excess laxity and reshaping the tummy. An incision is made across the lower stomach, below the bikini line, and muscles are surgically tightened with stitches. Excess skin and fat are removed, and the belly button is sometimes repositioned. Patients usually allow about two weeks off work following the tummy tuck, and have to wear supportive garments for about a month. Abdominoplasty is performed under General Anaesthetic in the safety of a hospital with a skilled medical team in attendance. So too is liposculpture (or liposuction) is another very common

plastic surgery technique, which involves surgically removing localised fat deposits from the abdomen and surrounding areas, using a combination of suction and a hollow needle (cannula). Treated areas may appear firmer, better contoured or flatter. The treatment doesn't improve cellulite, change stretch marks or help someone lose weight but gives a superior outcome for shaping and skin retraction and is a one-off treatment. CoolSculpting<sup>®</sup> is a newer procedure which addresses hard to shift bulges of fat around the hips, thighs and tummy. This is popular due to its non-invasive nature - no surgery, no needles, no anaesthetic and therefore, no down-time.

**Is it true that some people have abdominoplasty as part of a Caesarean section?** Not routinely. It might have happened somewhere, but it's not a good idea. Pregnancy is a state of immune suppression, so the complication rate would be much higher for further surgical procedures in addition to a Caesarean section, i.e. infections, and increased risk of clotting.

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