



ADVANCED AESTHETIC SURGERY

T H O M A S B L I N T N E R , M D . F A C S .

Compassionate Artistry

BODY CONTOURING SURGERY

Body contouring surgery involves reshaping and sculpting the human form into a more pleasing shape. The surgical procedures are designed to improve the one thing we all desire, regardless of body type: better proportions. This is a surgical arena where looking at the entire form of the patient and then honing in on the trouble areas is the most productive approach. There are numerous ways to perform body contouring:

Non surgical:

1. Exercise: This is the most important way to contour the body because it burns more calories and gives the body a nice toned shape in which to drape the skin and body fat over. Exercise is critical to shaping your body. Any surgery we perform will be better served if you are a regular exerciser.

2. Diet: Maintaining a good body shape entails either very good genes (in the case of most models) or dieting. Remember it is a simple equation: what you take in has to be burned and that our metabolism slows down as we age. No matter what is done to you surgically, your results will be better if you diet and decrease your caloric intake as you age.

Surgical:

I try to keep it simple when thinking about how to contour the body. There are several layers you need to know about your body to help with surgical body contouring planning.

- 1. You need to know about the skin. The firmness of your skin (which is a function of aging and genetics) will determine how it drapes over your body. Aging and smoking decrease our skins elasticity and can make or break our appearance. Great skin can make any body contour look better. All is not lost if you were born with poor skin. Obviously stopping smoking and minimizing sun damage are a good way to start. We have an excellent aesthetician who can recommend skin care products that will help you look your best. Skin operations include panniculectomy (abdominal area), thigh lift, arm lift (brachioplasty), and*

buttock lift. Breast lifting is generally included in the category of skin removal operations. These usually involve some fat removal also. Skin removal surgeries are generally better performed after weight loss but not always. These issues are best addressed at your consult.

2. Next is the fat layer. Most of us have too much in general but nearly all of us have too much in specific areas. This is the biggest contributor making us look out of proportion. Fat can be removed with liposuction or directly removed surgically ("open lipectomy"). Once the fat is removed our skin must shrink back or we will need to address skin removal separately. This also is best addressed at your consult but if your major concern is skin looseness then we will need to do a skin tightening procedure. Removing the troublesome fat can have dramatic results in body contouring. I will explain whether it is better to lose weight before surgery or if it is okay to perform the surgery and then lose weight. Operations that address fat and skin only are: liposuction (fat only) and certain lift procedures (panniculectomy or "pannic", arm lift (brachioplasty), thigh lift and buttock lift).
3. The third layer is the muscle layer. In most areas of the body muscle tone is dependant on exercise. With respect to women whose muscles have stretched due to pregnancy (and more commonly multiple pregnancies over a short amount of time) muscle tone may not respond to exercise alone. If muscle tightening is needed this can be performed but if you don't need it you don't want to have it done because it increases your pain and recovery time. The abdominoplasty (full tummy tuck muscle tightening of the abdomen) and mini-abdominoplasty (mini tummy tuck which is the lower 1/2 of the abdomen) are the only true muscle tightening procedures and this is done in conjunction with a panniculectomy.
4. The last layer that needs addressing when contouring the body is the internal fat. This is fat that lies between the muscles of the abdomen and the internal organs. We can't operate on this fat and is usually only addressed with weight loss through diet and exercise or bariatric surgery.

The abdomen is the most frequently contoured area of the body. Most people only think of liposuction or tummy tuck as the only two procedures performed on the abdomen. Liposuction is the most common procedure used to contour the abdomen. It requires good skin tone for best results as it only removes fat. Recovery from liposuction is relatively easy and involves short incisions. When skin removal is needed, you would need either a panniculectomy or a tummy tuck. I find the panniculectomy is a far more commonly needed procedure because most patients don't require muscle tightening. I will tell you if you require a pannic or tummy tuck and don't feel bad if I say you don't need a tummy tuck; just look at it this way, I have saved you pain, money and recovery time. Recovery time for pannic is 4-6 weeks, for a tummy tuck 8-10 weeks. Each of these procedures includes at least one if not two drains for 3 weeks.

The arm lift (brachioplasty) involves removing skin and fat from the arm above the elbow. The incision can be in the arm pit only or for more severe arm wobbling extend further down towards the elbow. It usually takes 2-3 weeks to recovery from this procedure.

The thigh lift usually is needed for patients with extensive weight loss. It can involve an incision just below the groin crease to extending down the leg for more significant reductions. Recovery for thigh lift is 3-4 weeks, with drains in place for 2 weeks.

The buttock lift usually has two parts: the upper buttocks lift which usually is part of the full body lift (see below) and the lower buttock lift, which involves the lower buttocks crease (known as the banana boat). I explain the difference and which will be in your best interests. Recovery for these procedures is approximately 3-4 weeks.

The full body lift is very commonly seen on shows like "Extreme Make-over" but is not frequently performed except in extreme cases of weight loss. I am not a big fan of the full body lift because it is more expensive than doing the front and back separately because it usually involves a hospital stay. The other problem with the full body lift is the higher wound breakdown rate and higher recovery times and pain in trying to find a place to sit that hasn't been operated on. I look for surgical procedures that are safer and less costly and usually the full body lift doesn't save you time, money or pain.

The surgery is usually performed at the hospital for safety reasons and takes anywhere from 1 ½ to 4 ½ hours.

Recovery: *The procedures listed above, except liposuction, usually involve 4-8 weeks and involve having one or two drains for 2-3 weeks to limit fluid build up. Most people can return to driving within 7-10 days and work within 2 weeks with light duty and sedentary jobs. Heavy duty jobs may require more time off.*

Thank you for allowing us the privilege to care for you!

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