



ADVANCED AESTHETIC SURGERY

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

C O M P A S S I O N A T E A R T I S T R Y

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 area 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 calories and builds muscle giving the body a nice toned shape in which to drape the skin and body fat over. Exercise is critical to shaping and recontouring 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 four 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 and treatments 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 loose weight before surgery or if it is okay to perform the surgery and then loose 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). Gynecomastia procedures and breast reduction procedures also fall into this category.
3. The third layer is the muscle layer. In most areas of the body muscle tone is dependant on exercise. With respect to women 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 entire abdomen) and mini-abdominoplasty (mini tummy tuck which is 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. If redundant skin is the issue, it is corrected with a panniculectomy, which only addresses the skin and extra abdominal fat layer. Most people feel that any surgery to improve the contour of the abdomen is a "tummy tuck"; by definition a tummy tuck is tightening the muscle layer when it has been stretched by multiple pregnancies or excess weight gain. 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 1-3 weeks and in bariatric patients sometimes longer up to 6 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 cases can 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 to the knee for more significant reductions. Recovery for thigh lift is 3-4 weeks, with drains in place for 1-2 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 long 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.

Generally, patients seeking body contouring surgery can group procedures together and depending on the length of the procedures chosen can safely be done on an outpatient basis. On occasion, for safety reasons, I may insist that you spend the night in the hospital. If that is the case, we’ll discuss the pros and cons of admission at your consult.

Complications: While very rare, there are inherent risks to any surgery. We feel it’s very important for you to understand what can happen and what you can do to help prevent complications.

- PE, DVT: These are blood clots that can go to your heart and lungs and they arise from inactivity and blood pooling in the lower half of the body. This is a serious matter that can result in hospitalization. VERY, VERY, RARE—because we insist all our patients to get up and move around the evening of and every day heir surgery...but realize because this is a very serious matter, we have a low index of suspicion, if you call with any concern that we feel could be a result of the above, we send you immediately for evaluation by a vascular surgeon. Remember, people who fidget, usually don’t get blood clots. Please let us know if you have any family history of bleeding or clotting disorders or if you are on birth control pills or smoke.
- Infection: we prescribe antibiotics for 5 days after your surgery. You are also given a dose of antibiotics through your IV during your surgery. Your job is to let us know if you have any signs or

symptoms of infection-earlier rather than later, so we can treat any issue that you are having. It is a rare occurrence after surgery, but it can happen. Sometimes it involves a drain site (which is a port of entry) or a skin incision, and most of the time, easily remedied with oral antibiotics.

- **Bleeding**: When we operate, we use a cautery device (“Bovie”) which is basically an electric knife to do dissection. It uses heat to coagulate (cut through and close off) tiny vessels and capillaries in the tissue. On occasion, too much activity, or doing the wrong activity or even a strong sneeze can cause one of these vessels to ooze and bleed. A little bleeding we expect and is quite normal but a larger bleed means a return to surgery. We try to be very specific with each procedure things that are off limits, if you follow those restrictions your risk of bleeding is really pretty low. If you have a doubt, listen to it-you don’t need to be out on a jet ski 3 days after surgery.
- **Wound healing issues**: We encourage good nutrition (high protein) after surgery, as well as not smoking, getting rest and activity restrictions in order to provide an ideal environment for your body to heal. Please keep in mind that we can only do so much if you choose to not follow these suggestions. A healthy person generally has no problems with wound healing. If you have any medical history like thyroid disorders, diabetes, etc, please make sure you let us know, it will help us help you to heal your best! Also, not to be repetitive, if you think you are having wound healing issues, call us; it’s what we are here for.
- **Seroma**: This is really on the lower end of “complication” but when we elevate tissue; your body does try to heal it by increasing production of certain fluids to heal the space. This fluid is evacuated from your body by drains. Once the drains are removed, the fluid either has to be absorbed by you, or collects under the skin. If that occurs, we see you in the office, generally 2-3 times a week and we remove it very easily. It prolongs your return to normal activity, but rarely does it affect your result.

Recovery: The procedures listed above, except liposuction, usually involve 4-8 weeks and involve having one or two drains for 2-3 weeks although in some patients it can be longer, 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!

Thomas B. Lintner, MD, FACS
711 Canton Road, NE Suite 400
Marietta, Georgia 30060
770-771-5151
www.tomlintnermd.com