Abdominoplasty or Panniculectomy
What to expect and how to prepare

This handout explains what to expect, how to prepare, and how to plan for your recovery after abdominoplasty or panniculectomy surgery.

About Your Surgery
An abdominoplasty ("tummy tuck") is surgery to remove extra skin and fat from the abdomen. The skin is lifted and re-draped, and extra skin at the bottom of the abdomen is removed. Inside the abdomen, the muscles of the abdominal wall are tightened. This surgery most often results in a flatter, smoother abdomen. But, you will have a scar.

A panniculectomy is surgery to remove extra skin and fat that hangs down from the abdomen. It does not tighten the muscles of the abdominal wall.

How to Prepare
• Do not take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your surgery. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, and others) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, and others). See the handout “Medicines to Avoid Before Surgery.”
• Do not shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do not shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.
• You will go home the same day as your surgery. You need someone to drive you home and stay with you for the first 2 to 5 days.
• Buy a Lycra/Spandex undergarment with a high waist to wear after surgery. Look for a Flexi, spandex bike short, or compression panty at a department store. Bring it with you to the hospital. Wearing this garment will help shape your abdomen and lessen swelling. You will wear it 24 hours a day for 1 month after your surgery.

Talk with your doctor if you have any questions about your surgery.
Night Before Surgery

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery:
  - Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.
  - Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair.
  - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothes.

- **Arrival time:** A staff person from the pre-surgery clinic will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery. If you are having surgery on a Monday, they will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from them by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6334.

  The staff person will tell you when to come to the hospital and remind you how to prepare for your surgery. If you have questions, they may forward your call to a nurse in the pre-surgery clinic or ask you to call your surgeon’s nurse.

Surgery Day

- **Shower at home:** Take another shower the morning of your surgery. Follow the same instructions as you did for your shower the night before.

- **Heating blanket:** At the hospital, while you wait to go into the operating room, we will cover you with a heating blanket to warm your body. This helps lower your risk of infection. Please ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

After Surgery

For Your Safety

Medicine given during and after your surgery will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery do **not**:

- Drive, or travel alone
- Use machinery
- Drink alcohol
- Sign legal papers or make important decisions
- Be responsible for the care of another person

Incision Care

You will have an incision across your lower abdomen, from hip bone to hip bone. The incision may or may not be closed with surgical staples and be covered with white tape (Steri-Strips) and gauze.
- Remove the gauze after 48 hours to shower. Replace it with clean gauze as needed. Panty liners work great for this.
- If you have tape strips over your incision, leave them in place. They will be removed at your follow-up visit after surgery, or you may remove them after 2 weeks.

**Drains**

You will have drains in your abdomen. You will be taught how to care for these before you leave the hospital. Please read the handout “Closed Bulb Drain Care: For a Jackson-Pratt (JP) or Blake drain” to learn more.

**Shower**

- You may shower 48 hours after your surgery.
- Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until the drains are removed and all your incisions are fully healed.

**Pain Control**

You can expect to have some discomfort after surgery, even if you use the pain medicine you received. If you are still very uncomfortable after taking your pain medicine, please call the clinic and ask to talk with a nurse.

**Activity and Work**

- For 6 weeks after surgery, do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 5 pounds. (A 2-liter bottle of soda weighs about 5 pounds.)
- Most people take 2 weeks off work to recover from surgery.

**When to Call**

Call the clinic or your provider if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
  - Redness
  - Increasing pain
  - Swelling
  - Bad-smelling drainage
  - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea or vomiting, or both
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit