

Body contouring after weight loss

Losing weight with medications like semaglutide (Ozempic®, Wegovy®) or tirzepatide (Mounjaro®) can transform your health and confidence. However, significant weight loss often introduces new challenges, such as loose skin, volume loss, and changes to body contours. Not only is loose hanging skin unsightly but it can cause functional problems. Patients feel that despite losing weight they cannot fully benefit from it as this excess skin restricts them and is also a cause of social embarrassment.

Surgical body contouring is a term used to describe several procedures that smooth, firm, reshape, and tighten the body. Body contouring procedures are personalized to the individual's needs. They may include procedures like tummy tucks, breast lifts, arm lifts, thigh lifts, and facelifts.

Introduction

Body contouring is a new and exciting field and one that is especially popular with people who have lost lots of weight and now want to tighten, tone, and define their improved bodies. Body contouring can improve the appearance of loose or sagging skin giving your body smoother contours and an improved shape.

Following excessive weight loss (either by diet and exercise, bariatric surgery or weight loss medications), you may be left with significant residual folds of fat and skin, which can be quite distressing both cosmetically (as they may be quite unsightly) but also functionally as these can interfere with daily activities. Such individuals request excision of these excessive folds such as in the abdomen, breasts, thighs, arms etc.

For some, the extra folds of excess skin may cause problems, such as:

- Discomfort
- Swelling, rash or ulcers between the skin folds in your groin that can lead to an infection.
- Problems with hygiene in these areas, especially the groin
- Difficulty walking
- Trouble urinating
- Problems with sexual activity
- Poor self-esteem

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It is important that you achieve your target new weight or at least are close enough before considering surgery.

It is also very important that you have realistic expectations of the results of surgery. Procedures performed after weight loss may not achieve the same cosmetic results and do have a higher revision rate when compared to the non-weight loss patient. One of the reasons for this is the marked loss of elasticity and therefore the less than ideal tissue quality.

Body contouring surgery types

Body contouring procedures are individualized, so talk to your plastic surgeon about the best options for you. Body contouring surgeries include:

- Tummy tuck (abdominoplasty)- it is a major aesthetic surgical procedure performed by a plastic surgeon to improve the shape and contour of the abdomen. The operation is undertaken to remove excess skin and fat, unwanted scars, stretch marks, and can tighten the underlying abdominal wall muscles
- Breast lift (mastopexy)- the purpose of a mastopexy or “breast uplift” is to make the breasts more shapely, firmer and better supported with a youthful and pert appearance whilst repositioning the nipple at its former height. Uplift surgery may also be combined with breast augmentation to restore the shape and the volume of the breast.
- Arm lift (brachioplasty)-it is a surgical procedure that reduces excess sagging underarm skin and fat, giving smoother contours. It can be combined with liposuction to help with the contours on the arm
- Thigh lift- it is designed to tighten the skin and improve the contour of the inner thigh, giving smoother contour
- Lower body lift- this is a more major operation aimed at lifting the thighs, buttocks, and abdomen all at the same time
- Upper body lift- this operation lifts the breasts, arms, and chest in a single procedure.

Benefits of body contouring surgery

Body contouring surgery after weight loss offers several significant benefits to individuals who have undergone substantial weight loss. After shedding excess pounds, many people are left with excess skin and tissue that can be both physically uncomfortable and emotionally distressing. Body contouring procedures are designed to address these issues, providing a more toned and sculpted appearance. Here are the key benefits of body contouring surgery after weight loss:

- Elimination of excess skin: One of the most notable benefits of body contouring is the removal of excess skin. After significant weight loss, the skin often fails to contract to the new body shape, leaving folds and sagging. Body contouring procedures remove this redundant skin, resulting in a firmer and more toned appearance

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- Improved body proportions: Body contouring helps to create more balanced and proportionate body contours. This is particularly important for individuals who have lost a substantial amount of weight, as it ensures that their new body shape is more harmonious
- Increased comfort and mobility: Excess skin can be physically uncomfortable and limit a person's mobility. Body contouring surgery eliminates this discomfort and allows for greater freedom of movement, making it easier to engage in physical activities
- Enhanced self-esteem: The physical changes that result from body contouring can significantly boost self-esteem and body image. Many individuals who have lost a considerable amount of weight find that their confidence soars after body contouring surgery
- Clothing fit: Body contouring ensures that clothing fits more comfortably and looks better. It allows individuals to wear a wider range of clothing styles and can make shopping for clothing a more enjoyable experience
- Improved muscle definition: By removing excess skin and fat, body contouring surgery can enhance muscle definition, particularly in areas like the abdomen, arms, and thighs. This can help individuals achieve a more toned and sculpted appearance
- Long-lasting results: The results of body contouring surgery are generally long-lasting, if individuals maintain a stable weight. This means that the improvements achieved through surgery can be maintained over time
- Reduced skin infections: Excess skin folds can trap moisture and create an environment conducive to skin infections, particularly in areas where skin rubs together. Body contouring reduces the risk of skin infections by eliminating these folds
- Psychological benefits: The emotional and psychological benefits of body contouring should not be underestimated. Many individuals report feeling a sense of closure and achievement after completing their weight loss journey with body contouring. It can help individuals fully embrace their new, healthier lifestyle
- Motivation for weight maintenance: For some individuals, body contouring surgery serves as an additional motivator to maintain their weight loss. The investment in their new appearance can drive them to stay committed to a healthier lifestyle
- Improved quality of life: The physical and emotional benefits of body contouring ultimately contribute to an improved quality of life. Individuals can engage in activities they may have been reluctant to participate in due to their excess skin, and they often enjoy a higher level of overall well-being
- Customized procedures: Body contouring procedures can be tailored to address specific areas of concern. Whether it's the abdomen, thighs, arms, or other areas, these surgeries can be customized to meet an individual's unique needs and goals

Am I a good candidate for body contouring?

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If you have reached your goal weight and are maintaining it, you may consider body contouring to further enhance your shape. People who benefit the most from body contouring are those who have excess skin in certain areas but minimal excess fat.

While surgery can dramatically improve your overall appearance, every person heals differently. An open discussion with the plastic surgeon about your hopes for the surgery and what you can expect is an important first step.

The plastic surgeon may discuss your existing health conditions, medications you take, alcohol consumption, prior surgeries and whether you smoke. If you smoke, you must quit at least several weeks before your surgery. Smoking greatly increases your risk for complications.

What are the complications of body contouring procedures?

In general, body contouring procedures are safe with an associated high degree of patient satisfaction. Nevertheless, no surgery is without risk.

All general anaesthetics carry risks such as blood clots, deep vein thrombosis and chest infection but with modern anaesthetic techniques, these are minimised.

Your risks depend on your age, the amount of weight you lost, your health conditions and the amount of tissue you need removed. Ask Dr Mackenzie about the risks that apply to you.