

# Waist Away

The stomach is a focal point of discontent for many men and women. After pregnancy or serious weight gain/weight loss, the problem can be exacerbated. The modern tummy tuck is no longer considered a major operation and is routinely performed in outpatient facilities. **Dr. Grant Stevens** takes Sophie Gordon through the procedure.

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**Before:** 46 year old desired improvement in her abdominal contours



**After:** Adominoplasty with repair to abdominal wall muscles and liposuction



**Before**



**After**



**Before**



**After**

**F**abby bellies are notoriously difficult to control through diet and exercise. Liposuction may be beneficial for someone who has extra fat around the abdomen, but anyone who also has lost muscle tone and developed extra sagging skin will require abdominoplasty to achieve a flatter waistline.

"Liposuction alone does not remove extra skin or tighten muscles," says Marina del Rey plastic surgeon, Dr. Grant Stevens. "A tummy tuck addresses all three major problem areas at once. In one operation we remove excess fat, saggy skin and tighten abdominal muscles that may have become distended with pregnancy or age."

Men and women can develop abdominal wall weaknesses as they age that can be repaired during abdominoplasty. During pregnancy, women lose their waistline as a result of the spreading of the surrounding abdominal muscles. "This spreading is referred to as 'diastasis recti' and is not an actual hernia but does cause a bulge from the pubic area to just above the belly button," explains Dr. Stevens. "Men may also experience this spreading following weight gain or in the presence of abdominal hernias."

The modern tummy tuck is not only a removal of skin but also an operation on fat, skin and muscle. Plastic surgeon Dr. David Stoker agrees, "We have adopted a more comprehensive and successful approach."

Incisions for a tummy tuck are made below the bathing suit line from hipbone to hipbone and are generally tailored to the patient's wishes. As Dr. Stevens explains, "Some female patients prefer to wear French cut bathing suits. In that case the incision comes up a little higher on the lateral extension. For those patients who prefer a traditional cut swim suit, the incision is made right at the hip line. In all cases, the incision and resulting scar are fashioned to meet the patient's wishes and afford them complete camouflage in a bikini or other bathing suit."

Another incision is made around the belly button. While the belly button is left intact, subcutaneous tissues are elevated from the lower abdomen to the rib cage area and redundant skin is removed, exposing the abdominal wall. "At that point, the abdominal wall is tightened by suturing together the abdominal muscles and repairing any damage that occurred during pregnancy or weight gain. At no time are these muscles actually cut," Dr. Stevens stresses. "It is the tightening of the muscles that really reduces the waistline."

He then performs liposuction on the abdominal wall, waist, hips and "love handles" in an effort to create a smooth, pleasing contour across the entire waistline. Finally, the abdominal skin above the belly button is stretched down to meet the incision at the pubic hairline. A small incision is made for the belly button, which will reach back through the abdominal wall as usual.

The shape and nature of the belly button doesn't change unless a patient specifically requests it.

"Any hernias of the belly button can be corrected. For example, 'outies' can be made 'innies' or it can be made a bit smaller if the patient so desires," explains Dr. Stoker.

Patients are usually instructed to wear a girdle or medical compression garment over the entire abdominal area to provide support and comfort while healing. It takes generally one to two weeks to make a complete recovery, and Dr. Stevens insists most of his abdominoplasty patients are back to work within a week or two. **AA&CSM**

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**Before:** 35 year old excess abdominal skin, fat and muscle laxity



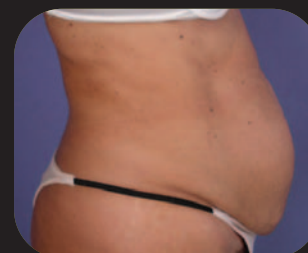
**After:** Adominoplasty with repair to the abdominal wall muscle



**Before**



**After**



**Before**



**After**