

Panniculectomy or Abdominoplasty

What to expect and how to prepare

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

About Your Surgery

A *panniculectomy* is surgery to remove extra skin and fat that hangs down from the abdomen.

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.

How to Prepare

- In some circumstances, you may need to spend the night in the hospital. If this is the case, your provider will discuss this with you.

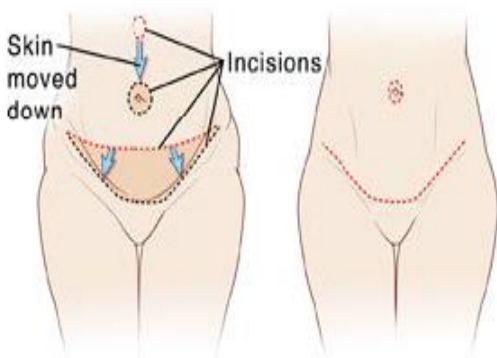
Recovery After Surgery

Post-Surgical Garment

- Wear the compression garment you were provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 6 weeks. Only take the garment off to wash it or to do daily hygiene.
- You may wear the compression garment over a thin shirt or tank top to keep it from rubbing on your skin.

Incision Care

- Remove the outermost bandage 48 hours after surgery, before you shower for the first time. Generally, this dressing is gauze and tape.
- If your incision has strips of white tape (Steri-Strips) over it, leave the bandage in place until it falls off. If it does not fall off on its own, we will remove it during your first follow up appointment.
- Some drainage from your incisions is normal. If you have any drainage from your incisions, you may cover the area with dry gauze or a panty liner. Otherwise, leave it uncovered.



Your surgeon will make incisions across your abdomen to remove excess tissue.

Hygiene

- Please take a shower 48 hours after surgery. We recommend daily showers to reduce the risk of infection.
- Use mild soap and wash your incisions very gently.
- Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until your incisions are fully healed and no scabs remain. This may take 4 to 6 weeks.

Drains

- You will have 2 or 3 drains in your abdomen. We will teach you how to care for them. Please read the handout “Caring for your JP Drains.”

Activities and Return to Work

For 6 weeks:

- Do not lift, push, or pull anything that weighs more than 8 pounds (about the weight of a gallon of water). This includes children and pets.
- Avoid *aerobic exercise* (activities that cause heavy breathing or sustained elevated heart rate).
- Walking is encouraged and helpful for healing and rebuilding strength. Start with 3 to 4 walks a day for 5 to 10 minutes each. Gradually increase your distance and length of time as you heal.
- Return to work varies from person to person and depends on the type of work you do. Please discuss with your surgeon what may be best for you.

Sleep Position

- Sleep on your back for 4 weeks after surgery, with your head slightly raised, for example a “beach chair” position.
 - It may be helpful to stack pillows, use a wedge pillow, or sleep in a recliner to keep your head raised.
- Please do not sleep on your stomach until you are cleared by your provider.

Pain Control

- Please read the handout “Pain Control After Reconstructive Surgery” to learn more.
- Please do not use ice or heat directly on your surgical sites.

Wound vac

- In certain situations, your surgeon may decide to place you in a dressing called a *wound vac*. This is a suction device that promotes healing by holding the incision edges together and drawing fluid out of the wound.
- We will remove the wound vac in clinic after 5 to 7 days. The therapy unit will turn off automatically at 7 days. Please ensure you are charging the machine while in place, for example while sleeping. Do not get this dressing wet. If your therapy unit alarms, please contact the supplier at 800.275.4524.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

During Clinic Hours (Monday through Friday except holidays, 8am to 5pm):

If you have any questions or concerns, we recommend messaging your surgeon through EPIC MyChart. Please include a photo if applicable.

Alternatively, you may call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery at 206-598-1217 option 2.

Urgent Needs Outside of Clinic Hours

If you have an urgent care need after hours, on weekends, or holidays, please call 206-598-6190 and ask to speak to the plastic surgeon on call.

When to Contact the Clinic

Check your incisions every day. Contact our clinic or your doctor if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing (hold pressure on the site to lessen bleeding)
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and/or chills
- Any signs of infection at your surgical site:
 - Redness
 - Increased swelling
 - Bad-smelling drainage
 - Pus or cloudy-colored drainage (white, yellow, or green in color)
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- New rash
- Pain that is worsening and not improved with your pain medicine