

BODY CONTOURING SURGERY

Body contouring procedures reshape different parts of the body through techniques designed to remove, or tighten sagging skin and overstretched muscles, as well as get rid of localized fat deposits. To learn more about one of the most popular body contouring surgical procedures – tummy tucks – we spoke with Carol Wray, MD, a board certified plastic surgeon with The Center for Plastic Surgery at Ridgewood Hill in Salem.

TUMMY TUCKS

As we age, lose a significant amount of weight or bear children, skin in our midsection stretches and loses tone. Sometimes we are left with so much excess skin sagging around our stomach area that we can grab it in our hands. If this is what you see when you stand in front of a mirror, then a tummy tuck, also known as abdominoplasty, may be right for you.

Two types of tummy tuck procedures are available: complete tummy tuck and mini tummy tuck. Depending on how much skin needs to be removed and whether or not abdominal muscles require tightening determines which procedure is best suited for the patient.

“A complete tummy tuck includes tightening the skin from the ribcage to the bikini line by removing the excess skin,” explains Dr. Wray. “Usually the underlying muscles are pulled together if they have been stretched from pregnancy or excessive weight.”

The incisions extend from hip to hip and around the belly button, the majority of which fall beneath the bikini line and are generally unnoticed in most types of two-piece swimwear. Complete tummy tuck surgery is performed in an outpatient surgery center under general anesthesia and lasts three to four hours.

Dr. Wray sometimes performs mini tummy tuck surgery in her office under local anesthesia. Since muscles are not usually tightened and the upper abdomen is not tightened, this procedure can take less than an hour.

“Usually no follow up procedures are required, but sometimes we add liposuction of the lateral (side) abdomen at the same time to help shape the waist,” explains Dr. Wray. “Once everything has healed and settled, the results are evaluated for asymmetries or irregularities that could possibly be improved with a minor office procedure.”

Patients are usually seen a few days after their procedure, then on a weekly basis for three to four weeks until drains are out and there is no fluid accumulation. After that, they are seen as often as needed and evaluated at three to four months to see if anything further needs to be done.

With a complete tummy tuck, there is a large incision from hip to hip, and muscles are usually pulled together, so it will be uncomfortable using the abdominal muscles. Numbing fluid is placed in the area prior to waking up, so the immediate time after surgery is relatively comfortable. This discomfort gets better with time, usually in six to eight weeks. Pain is addressed with prescription and non-prescription medications. Total recovery for a complete tummy tuck is six to eight weeks.

A mini tummy tuck does not involve the muscles, and is much less painful. However, pain is still addressed with prescription and non-prescription medications, and patients are frequently feeling good within a week. Total recovery time for a mini tummy tuck can be as little as two weeks.

TUMMY TUCK



COMPLETE TUMMY TUCK:

A cosmetic surgery procedure used to make the abdomen thinner and more firm by tightening the skin from the ribcage to the bikini line by removing the excess skin.



MINI TUMMY TUCK:

A cosmetic surgery procedure used to make the abdomen thinner without involving the muscles.



COMPLETE TUMMY TUCK:

starts at \$1550



MINI TUMMY TUCK:

starts at \$7255

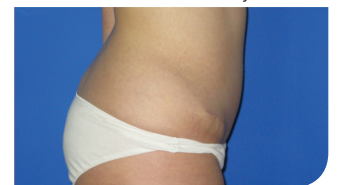


BEFORE & AFTER:

Before tummy tuck



Three months after tummy tuck



One thing Dr. Wray stresses to patients is that a complete tummy tuck is fairly major surgery and will require significant down time. "Patients need to plan ahead for this, especially if they have small children since they will be unable to lift them," she explains.

After complete or mini tummy tucks, patients can drive when they feel comfortable and are safe, and no longer need narcotic pain medications that interfere with driving times, which is usually in one to two weeks.

A mini tummy tuck starts at \$1550 and a complete tummy tuck starts at \$7255, which includes lab work, the operating room and anesthesia charges. Both mini and complete tummy tucks are considered elective procedures, which are not covered by insurance.

To determine if patients are ideal candidates for tummy tuck surgery, Dr. Wray points to three important factors. "Patients should be in good overall health, not smoke and are at or near their ideal body weight. Ideally patients would maintain a consistent, healthy weight for at least nine - 12 months before having surgery. Dr. Wray also emphasizes that a tummy tuck is not meant to help people lose weight and is not a substitute for a healthy diet and active lifestyle. "Making a commitment to a new, healthy weight not only ensures patients will receive the best surgical results, but also is essential to maintaining the long-term results for years to come."

FAT REDUCTION WITHOUT SURGERY: COOLSCULPTING®

A relatively new non-surgical procedure called CoolSculpting® is delivering unprecedented results in the removal of stubborn fat in areas that have typically resisted efforts through diet and exercise. Dr. Wray shares more about this FDA-approved procedure she offers.

"CoolSculpting® is a non-surgical procedure that works through controlled cooling to target fat cells underneath the skin, treating stubborn fat that diet and exercise alone can't seem to touch," explains Dr. Wray. "It addresses superficial fat cells around the waist, stomach, thighs, back, arms, and underneath the chin without harming surrounding skin or tissue."

The procedure is performed by placing the CoolSculpting® device on the targeted areas. Those areas are pulled between cooling panels by suction. The device then cools the fat cells to just above freezing causing destructive crystals to form on the fat cells. The treated fat cells are metabolized naturally from the body, and leave the treated area sculpted and smooth. "Approximately 20% of the fat treated disappears," says Dr. Wray.

CoolSculpting® is performed in the office while the patient is awake with each treatment cycle taking 35 to 75 minutes. With the newer, shorter treatment times, there is little, if any, discomfort and minimal swelling and no need for compression garments.

"There is no downtime," explains Dr. Wray. "We have had patients treat one area, go workout at the gym, then return the same day for another treatment.

Dr. Wray says it can take two - four months to see the final results. "At this time, we compare before and after photos to measure the difference."

Each treatment is between \$725 - \$995, depending on the area. Since the procedure is considered elective, it is not covered by insurance.

The best candidates are people at or near their ideal weight and have small areas of excess fat that are resistant to diet and exercise. Like all cosmetic procedures, surgical and non-surgical, Dr. Wray says it's important to remember that CoolSculpting® is not a substitute for a maintaining a healthy diet or exercise.



COOLSCULPTING



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About \$725 - \$995



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