

I Want My Figure Back!



Before: 28 year old female with excess fat.



After: Liposuction to the thighs, legs, and buttocks by Dr. Grant Stevens. Patient followed with improved diet and exercise program.

The two most popular postpartum cosmetic procedures are abdominoplasty and breast enhancement. Sophie Gordon talks to Marina del Rey plastic surgeon **Dr. Grant Stevens** about combining the two in a “quick fix” operation for mothers who want to restore their pre-family figure.

The two areas that suffer most after having a baby are your tummy and breasts. Dr. Grant Stevens, Medical Director of Marina Plastic Surgery Associates in LA, says new techniques combining abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) and breast enhancement surgery are safe, easy and require minimal recovery time.

There are three parts to an abdominoplasty. The extra skin formed during pregnancy is removed, extra fat that has accumulated in the waistline is also removed, and the muscles that have become distended during pregnancy are tightened. “The most common misconception about tummy tucks is that it is just simply cutting skin away,” says Dr. Stevens. “That couldn’t be further from the truth. It is a combination of excising the extra skin, sucking away the unwanted fat, and tightening the distended, loose muscles.”

During pregnancy the stomach muscles spread to the side allowing for the baby to grow in the uterus. After the delivery of the

baby the muscles do not spontaneously return back to the midline. This is why women who have had multiple pregnancies have a protruding abdomen, especially between the belly button and the pubic area - the muscles have spread apart. “We don’t cut any muscle in the repair process,” says Dr. Stevens. “We simply move the muscles back to the midline, put permanent sutures in a two-layer fashion and restore the pre-pregnancy anatomy.”

Most of the extra skin that has stretched during pregnancy is removed. “Take your hand and put it over your tummy between your pubic area and your navel,” directs Dr. Stevens. “All the skin that your hand is covering is removed (including stretch marks) and the skin above your belly button is brought down to the level of the pubic hair.”

Extra fat is removed using liposuction. “The recovery time is generally about a week to ten days. People have the mistaken idea that an abdominoplasty is an intra-abdominal

procedure when, in fact, it is entirely extra-abdominal. We don’t go inside the abdomen and we don’t see any abdominal or pelvic organs. There is no muscle cutting. It is a very superficial operation.”

The size and shape of incisions and resulting scars are determined by the amount of skin that needs to be removed. A younger woman, or someone who has never been particularly heavy, may only require a small incision. They can range all the way up to incisions that go from hip to hip on women who have had a massive weight loss or have done a lot of yo-yo dieting. The shape of the incisions can also be varied to accommodate different shapes of underwear or bathing suits. Recent changes in the shape of the incision have included accommodation for the French cut, one-piece and two-piece bathing suits.

“A woman considering a tummy tuck needs to feel that having a tummy tuck scar is a worthwhile trade-off for a new figure,”

Dr. Stevens says, adding: "In the last 20 years I have been doing this, I cannot remember a single patient telling me she wished she hadn't had the tummy tuck. Women are happy to give up the extra skin, extra fat, and have a flat, firm abdomen!"

What if you become pregnant again after the operation? "Many patients become pregnant again and it is no problem," assures Dr. Stevens. "But the skin does stretch again and the muscles often move apart, and they may put on a little extra weight. It is preferable to have all your kids first and your tummy tuck second."

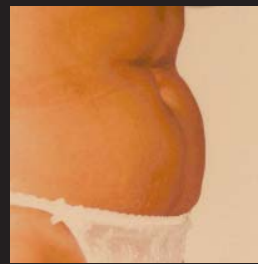
During pregnancy and while they are breast-feeding, most women's breasts enlarge. Following the delivery of the baby and cessation of breast-feeding, the breasts shrink but the skin does not contract as much as the breasts. This leaves the breast with a disproportionate amount of skin resulting in sagginess of the breast. Often women have smaller breasts after they have children than before. "Women typically have two complaints," says Dr. Stevens. "The first is that the breasts are saggier than they want them to be, and the second is that they are smaller than they want them to be."

Breast enhancement surgery lifts and enlarges the breast. "The majority of women have a breast lift and breast enhancement at the same time. To lift the breasts we do a procedure known as The Laser Bra where an internal bra, created with the patient's own tissue, is used to lift the breasts. The breasts are enlarged with either saline or silicone implants, depending on the patient's preference."

"We actually do a number of combination procedures," he says. "Many women undergo a tummy tuck and breast enhancement procedure simultaneously. The surgery for the combined procedures can be performed safely and effectively in approximately three hours under a general anesthetic. We generally observe the patient in an aftercare facility overnight and they return to work in a week to ten days."

"Combining a tummy tuck with breast enhancement is very popular as it requires only one recovery period, one anesthetic, and reverses the effects of pregnancy on both the breast and the abdomen. The women return with a flat abdomen, a newfound waistline, and beautiful, perky breasts."

Dr. Stevens gives his patients postoperative instructions that assist in keeping the weight off and maintaining their new figure. Common sense dictates that if you invest in this type of procedure, you will make the special effort to keep your body looking good with diet and exercise. AA&CSM



Before: 45 year old female unhappy with her abdomen.



After: Abdominoplasty, liposuction, and tightening of the abdomen wall by Dr. Grant Stevens.



Before: 54 year old grandmother who was unhappy with her abdomen waist and thighs.



After: Abdominoplasty, liposuction of the abdomen, thighs and waist by Dr. Grant Stevens.



Before: 54 year old with numerous abdominal surgeries and three hernias.



After: Abdominoplasty and abdominal wall repair by Dr. Grant Stevens.



Before: 33 year old mother of three children.



After: Abdominoplasty (tummy tuck) and breast augmentation by Dr. Grant Stevens.