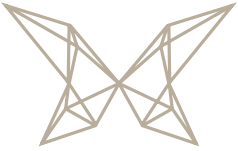


# **Postoperative Instructions**

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**TUMMY TUCK  
(ABDOMINOPLASTY)**

**Dr Rory Dower**



# Postoperative Instructions

## TUMMY TUCK (ABDOMINOPLASTY)

You have undergone a surgical procedure in a day clinic setting and will spend some time in recovery, before moving to the ward for an overnight stay. You may require more than one night depending on how quickly you recover. It is important for you to arrange to have either a friend or family member drive you home and stay with you for the first 2448 hours

## What to Expect

### IMMEDIATELY AFTER SURGERY

- Despite feeling tired and sore for a few days, you should be up and about the day after surgery
- Maximum discomfort will occur in the first few days
- If you find it uncomfortable to laugh or cough, you may find it helpful to support your scar with a folded towel held against your tummy
- Your tummy will be swollen and bruised postoperatively. The bruising will usually settle in 1-2 weeks. Swelling takes longer to settle and the majority of the swelling will have resolved by 3 months.
- Sometimes pain, swelling or bruising may be slightly different between the two sides. Although this is usually normal, if a great difference develops between the two sides, please contact Dr. Dower's rooms
- Be aware that there will be some sensation loss around the navel and lower abdomen which may last a few months – do not stand too close to or lean against hot surfaces or use a water bottle on your abdomen until sensation has fully returned

### LONG TERM

- A trimmer, flatter tummy with a narrower waistline
- Decrease in the tummy roll when leaning forward
- A scar running from one hipbone to the other within the underwear line, and a scar around the belly button

## Medication and Handling pain

- You may recommence your normal medication the day after surgery unless otherwise advised
- Take pain medication as prescribed
- In order to “break” the pain cycle, we recommend taking the pain meds regularly, as prescribed, for the first 3 days, even if discomfort is only mild
- Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin for the week following surgery, unless this is for a medical condition, in which case please discuss this with Dr Dower
- Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medication
- You may apply ice compresses to the tummy during the first 24 hours after surgery. This will help to minimize swelling and discomfort. Please do not apply the ice directly to the skin as this may cause a burn, especially where you have decreased sensation

## Wound Care, Stitches, Dressings And Drains

- The stitches are dissolvable
- If you have any outside stitches, these will be removed around 10-14 days
- Expect mild drainage onto the wound dressing covering the incisions
- Keep the area around the dressings clean
- You may pad the area over the incisions for comfort
- If your incision was closed with micropore tape, it can stay on for up to 14 days, as long as the tape remains relatively clean.
- If your incision was closed with steri-strips, these will generally start to fall off in 10-14 days. You may trim loose ends, but do not remove adherent strips
- If your incision was closed with skin glue, it will slowly flake off over 10-14 days
- There may be drains in place when you go home. These will usually be removed within the next few days. These are easier to carry around if placed in a small bag

# Dr Rory Dower

## Postoperative Instructions | Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)

### Showering and Bathing

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- You may shower after 48 hrs. Please only pat your dressings dry afterwards
- If you need to, you can remove excess moisture with a blow dryer on a warm (not hot) setting, remembering that the skin may be numb and not able to feel if the dryer is too hot
- No bathing or soaking the incision site for the first 4 weeks

### Sleeping

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- When lying in bed use 2 – 3 pillows under your knees, this will help to take the strain off your abdominal muscles and your incision
- If lying on your side, keep your knees bent with a pillow between for comfort
- Due to the fact that there is likely to be some degree of soiling of your wounds, try to use old linen in case this gets stained.

### Level of Activity, Exercise and Driving

- Start walking as soon as possible after surgery to reduce the risk of blood clots in your lower legs
- You may feel more comfortable walking slightly bent over during the first couple of days. Following this time, gradually build up to a complete upright stance
- Although you can gently walk about and do light duties, please avoid any excessive stretching or lifting during the first 7 to 10 days
- You may return to work after 2-4 weeks
- You may resume light exercises at around 2 weeks
- Upper body and arm exercises can commence 4 weeks postoperatively while lower body exercise can commence 6 weeks postoperatively.
- Avoid straining of abdominal muscles for 6 weeks
- Body contact sports should be avoided for 6-8 weeks
- Resume sexual activity as comfort permits, usually 2-3 weeks post-operatively
- Avoid driving for the first 2 weeks. Do not drive until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication, and have full range of motion of your arms, and can stop the car or swerve in an emergency.
- If you are doing something that is causing you pain, this is usually the body's natural warning system to take it easy and not over exert yourself

### Smoking and Alcohol

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- Avoid smoking for the first 4 weeks after surgery as smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications
- Avoid alcohol for at least 72 hours after surgery, as this may increase your risk of bleeding

### Diet

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- Everyone recovers from their anesthetic differently. Some people feel no side effects while others are more noticeably affected, feeling tired and even sick for the first couple of days
- Eat lightly with small meals throughout the day to minimize sickness
- Drink plenty of fluids in the form of water and fresh juices, in the first few days after surgery
- Avoid caffeine and carbonated drinks for the first few days

# Dr Rory Dower

## Postoperative Instructions | Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)

### What to Wear

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- Your pressure garment should be worn day and night for 4-6 weeks. This may be removed for washing purposes for short periods only
- Please make sure that the garment does not cause an indentation or ridge whilst being worn as this may become permanent if worn for long periods of time

### Scar Management

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- A scar takes 9-12 months to reach full maturity at which stage the final result will be evident.
- The scars may become a little more pink and noticeable, even red and lumpy temporarily before they start to improve.
- Avoid exposing scars to sun for at least 12 months. Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 50 or greater)
- Scar science can be used to improve the appearance of the scar. You can start applying this from 6 weeks post-operatively. For the first 2-6 weeks of treatment, the cream should be applied over the Micropore tape. After this, it can be applied directly to the scar. For the scar science to have a beneficial effect, it should be used for a period of at least 6 months from the date of surgery. After 1 year the scar has reached maturity and there is no further benefit
- If not using scar science, you can apply Micropore tape to the incisions for 6 months, changing this every 7 to 10 days. Do not remove the tape every day as it will cause irritation of the surrounding skin. Incision areas may be massaged over the Micropore tape to help improve the scar
- Local massage to the scar is usually begun at around 4 weeks. Use your normal body lotion creams or Bio-Oil to facilitate this action
- Do not use any creams containing Vitamin E to treat the incision areas for the first 3 months

### When should I call?

- Fresh bleeding, other than that of a minor nature
- Pain not relieved by pain relieving tablets
- Sudden onset new and worsening pain
- Excessive swelling or redness
- Increased redness along the incision sites
- Discharge or foul odour from the incision sites
- Fever of 38 degrees Celsius or above
- Any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache or vomiting
- Increased pain in your calves, shortness of breath, or chest pain

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**EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBER: +27 (0)82 876 1097**