

# Tummy Tuck

## & Body Contouring Recovery Guide

**C**ongratulations on taking the exciting step to enhance your look through tummy tuck surgery. Our goal with this guide is to provide you with helpful information at your fingertips to make your recovery as smooth and speedy as possible.

In the initial weeks after your surgery, you will be sore and more swollen than usual as your body heals. But as swelling diminishes, your abdomen's new contours will become fully visible—most patients can see a dramatic difference within one month after surgery—and you will enjoy the satisfaction of having a beautifully-contoured, smooth, flat abdomen and the added confidence that goes with it.

The amount of time it takes to recover from tummy tuck surgery varies depending upon the extent of abdominal repair required and each patient's physical condition:

- 10-14 days for a tummy tuck that includes repair of the muscle wall
- 7-10 days for a tummy tuck with no muscle wall repair

### IMPORTANT POINT

To prevent lower extremity blood clots, it is very important that you take slow 10-minute walks every two hours, except while you sleep, starting on the day after your surgery. Likewise, flexing and extending your feet at the ankles while resting also promotes improved circulation in the calves.

### DR. PATRONELLA'S OPTIMAL RECOVERY GUIDE FOR TUMMY TUCK SURGERY

Prior to your surgery, Dr. Patronella and his staff will provide you with detailed information to help you prepare for your tummy tuck surgery and recovery. We will review a packet of information with you which covers topics such as preparations to follow before surgery; medications, herbs, and supplements to avoid; and instructions for the postoperative period.

As an additional helpful resource, Dr. Patronella has created this Optimal Recovery Guide that will lead you step-by-step through the recovery process and provide you with guidelines to follow regarding exercise, activities, diet, and incision care.

For Dr. Patronella's patients, tummy tuck surgery is enormously rewarding for the aesthetic transformation and accompanying increase in self-confidence that it provides. The results are long lasting provided that you follow healthy eating and exercise habits that help you to maintain a stable weight. Many patients find that tummy tuck surgery inspires them to implement positive lifestyle habits that help them to feel their best and maintain their attractive new contours.

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### PREPARATION FOR TUMMY TUCK SURGERY

These recommendations have a specific purpose such as reducing the risk of bleeding (herbal supplements, aspirin, Advil, etc.), blood clots (estrogen hormones, smoking), and wound healing complications (smoking).

1. Continue (or begin) conditioning exercise such as aerobic exercise, yoga, Pilates, swimming, or weight training. Strengthening your body through aerobic exercise will enable you to recover from surgery more quickly.
2. Begin a high-protein diet that includes foods such as lean chicken, fish, eggs, beans, and protein shakes. Protein enables your body to more effectively heal wounds.
3. **NO SMOKING for one month before surgery and one month after surgery.** There should be NO SMOKING by anyone confined with you in any closed environment during this period. Smoking significantly compromises the body's ability to heal and increases the likelihood of complications such as wound separation and poor scarring occurring.
4. Stop birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy, including topical or vaginal estrogen creams, for one month before and one month after surgery. This important recommendation reduces your risk of blood clots.
5. Avoid aspirin and other over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications such as Advil or Aleve (for a full list contact my office) for two weeks before and two weeks after surgery. This reduces the risk of excessive bleeding.
6. Avoid over-the-counter herbal supplements for two weeks before and two weeks after surgery, to further reduce bleeding risk.
7. Do not shave the pubic area for one week before surgery to lessen infection potential.
8. Two weeks before surgery, begin taking the VitaMedica Recovery Support vitamins that are provided to you to aid in wound healing and lessen bruising and swelling.



## THE TUMMY TUCK SCAR

In a tummy tuck procedure, an incision is most commonly made from one hip to the other. To diminish the appearance of the scar, Dr. Patronella incorporates a scar therapy program into the postoperative care of his tummy tuck patients. The products in this regimen are designed to provide an optimal healing environment for the scar in order to soften its appearance.

The tummy tuck scar will continue to fade over a period of one to two years. To prevent darkening of the scar, liberally apply sunscreen to the scar, and avoid exposing it to the sun.

## DR. P's SCAR THERAPY PROGRAM



Careful attention to early incisional treatment and the resulting scar can make a dramatic difference in its appearance. Continuous use of steri-strips for the first 5-6 weeks provides good protection and support for the early incision. Occasionally, skin irritation occurs with steri-strips, requiring a brief (2-3 days) interval without the strips, applying a mild steroid cream (1% hydrocortisone) and vitamin E / silicone gel to re-establish moisture and skin conditioning instead.

If there is a true allergic reaction, the strips will be discontinued and the scar therapy regimen will be implemented once the reaction has resolved. Several products may be recommended during scar treatment. It is important for each patient to assess tolerance and provide feedback.

**1. Retinol or Retin-A**—Applied nightly to cleansed skin on the scar, a retinol product such as SkinMedica's Tri-Retinol Complex is an exfoliant for the scar surface, reducing thickness and unwanted pigmentation. Retinol should not be used until the 5-6 week mark to reduce the chance of irritation. This product will often cause dryness with flaking and irritation, requiring supplemental moisturizers such as vitamin E/aloe. If the skin irritation is severe, discontinuation for a brief 2-3 day interval is required. Some patients will only tolerate an every other night application.

**2. Silicone Gel**—Applied nightly over the retinol and in the morning over a moisturizer (vitamin E/ aloe), silicone gel assists in flattening scars and sealing in natural oils to maintain skin hydration and conditioning.

**3. Vitamin C/E in silicone carrier**—A skin care product containing vitamins C and E, such as SkinMedica's Vitamin C +E Complex is a good alternative for those intolerant of retinol, or as a substitute. Vitamin C acts as an exfoliant, reducing surface scar and pigmentation, while vitamin E is a conditioner/ moisturizer.

**4. Hydroquinone 4%**—A strong bleaching agent, this product may be required in those patients who have a greater tendency to hyperpigment. This is commonly seen in darker skinned people (Blacks, Hispanics, Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, etc.) and requires early attention to prevent hyperpigmentation.

**5. Scar Recovery Gel with Centelline™**—A blend of patented therapeutic ingredients clinically-proven to reduce scar visibility.

## ADDED TOUCH PROGRAM TO SUPPORT RECOVERY



As part of a comprehensive approach to providing his patients with attentive care throughout the entire surgical process, Dr. Patronella developed an "Added Touch" program consisting of services that are specially designed to support and speed patients' healing following surgery. This includes:

### Home Health Visit

As part of this exclusive service, patients recovering in the Houston area are offered a private visit to their homes or hotel accommodations a day or two after their surgery from a certified medical professional. This skillful staff member will change your bandages, educate your caregiver in providing appropriate care techniques, and provide Dr. Patronella with an update on your recovery.

### Therapeutic Massage

This gentle massage blends lymphatic and Swedish massage techniques to provide the following benefits:

- Stimulate the lymphatic system to reduce bruising and swelling
- Help you to regain your flexibility and range-of-motion
- Stimulate nerve endings to help diminish numbness and discomfort

### VitaMedica's Recovery Support Program

Taken for two weeks prior to surgery and two weeks after, VitaMedica's Recovery Support program is formulated to speed wound healing, support the immune system, prevent infection, minimize inflammation, and reduce bruising. Recognized for their beneficial role in the healing process, the program's nutrients include vitamin A, vitamin C, copper, selenium, bioflavonoids, bromelain, quercetin, and homeopathic Arnica Montana.



While this guide is comprehensive, most patients will have some questions after surgery that may not have been anticipated. We are always available during your recovery to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have. You may reach us by calling our office at **713.799.9999**.

*Dr. Chris Patronella was inspired to develop his unique approach to abdominoplasty—the True Form Tummy Tuck™—by his desire to create results that more authentically captured the subtle features and smooth, elegant beauty of a youthful abdomen. The True Form Tummy Tuck restores the abdomen's firmness and soft contour nuances while preventing the "artificially flat, board-like look" and other undesirable surgical characteristics that traditional tummy tuck methods often produce.*

