

# BODY CONTOURING

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
PLASTIC SURGEONS •

# What is Body Contouring?

Dramatic weight loss has many benefits, but after weight reduction surgery, or any substantial amount of weight loss, the skin and tissues often lack the elasticity to conform to the reduced body size.

Surgical body contouring following major weight loss removes excess fat and sagging skin while improving the shape of the underlying support tissue. The result is a more normal appearance with smoother contours.

## Body contouring procedures may include:

- Breast lift: sagging, flattened breasts
- Tummy tuck: apron of excess skin hanging over the lower abdomen
- Fat grafting: adding fat to improve volume and shape
- Lower body lifts: sagging of the abdomen, buttocks, groin, and outer thighs
- Medial thigh lift: sagging of the inner, outer, and mid thigh
- Brachioplasty (arm lift): sagging of the upper arms

## Is it right for me?

In general, good candidates for body contouring are:

- Adults whose weight loss has stabilized
- Healthy individuals without medical conditions that impair healing or increase risk of surgery
- Non-smokers/vapers
- Individuals with a positive outlook and realistic goals
- Individuals who are committed to leading a healthy lifestyle with proper nutrition and fitness



# Consultation & Preparing for Surgery

## During your consultation be prepared to discuss:

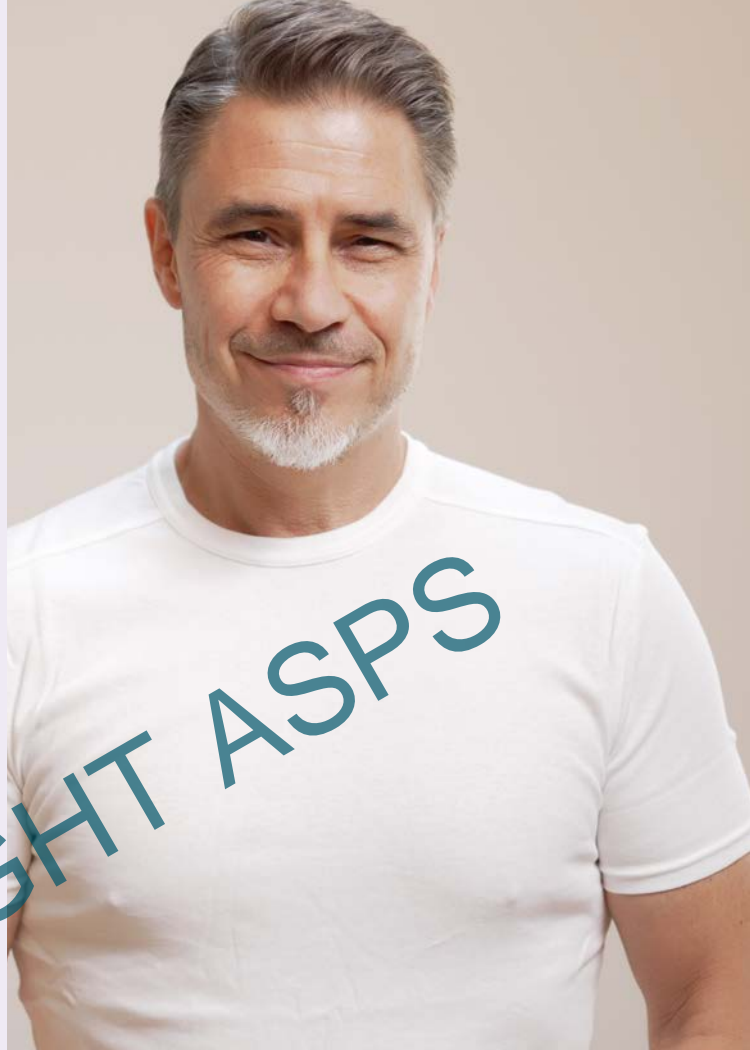
- Your surgical goals
- Medical conditions, drug allergies, and medical treatments
- Current medications, vitamins, herbal supplements, alcohol, tobacco, and drug use
- Previous surgeries

## Your surgeon will also:

- Evaluate your general health status and any pre-existing health conditions or risk factors
- Take photographs
- Examine your body and take detailed measurements
- Discuss your options
- Recommend a course of treatment
- Discuss likely outcomes of body contouring surgery and any risks or potential complications

## Prior to surgery, you may be asked to:

- Get cleared for surgery by your bariatric surgeon or primary care doctor
- Get lab testing
- Take certain medications or adjust your current medications
- Stop smoking/vaping
- Avoid taking aspirin, anti-inflammatory drugs, and herbal supplements as they can increase bleeding



**Body contouring surgery may be performed in an accredited office-based surgical facility, licensed ambulatory surgical center, or a hospital.**

If your body contouring is performed on an outpatient basis, be sure to arrange for someone to drive you to and from surgery and to stay with you for at least the first night following surgery.

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Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon questions. It's very important to understand all aspects of your body contouring surgery. It's natural to feel some anxiety, whether it's excitement for your anticipated new look or a bit of preoperative stress. Don't be shy about discussing these feelings with your plastic surgeon.

# The Procedure

The procedures necessary to achieve your goals will be defined along with a plan for the timing of these procedures. Plastic surgery procedures that may be recommended by your physician include:

- **Lower body lift:** to correct sagging of the abdomen, buttocks, groin, and outer thighs
- **Breast lift:** to correct sagging, flattened breasts
- **Arm lift:** to correct sagging of the upper arms
- **Thigh lift:** to correct sagging of the inner, outer, and mid-thigh

## Step 1 - Anesthesia

Medications are administered for your comfort during the surgical procedures. The choices include intravenous sedation and general anesthesia. Your doctor will recommend the best choice for you.

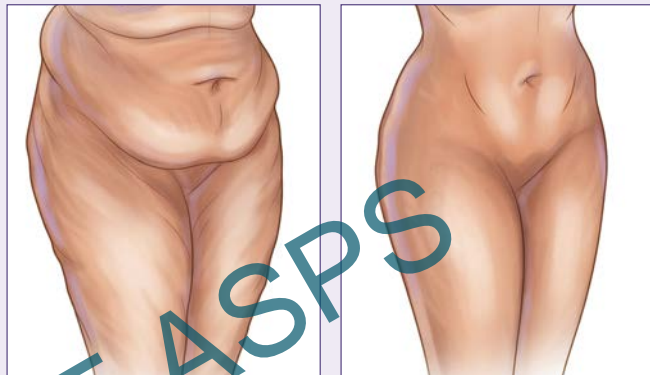
## Step 2 - The incision

All body contouring procedures require large incisions to remove excess skin. In many cases, these incisions may be extensive. Incision length and pattern depend on the amount and location of excess skin to be removed, as well as personal preference and your doctor's surgical judgment. Advanced techniques usually allow incisions to be placed in strategic locations where they can be hidden by most types of clothing, but this is not always the case.

Body contouring is often performed in stages. Your particular condition and goals, as well as your plastic surgeon's best judgment, will all influence a surgical plan. While it may have taken you a long time to lose all the excess weight, it may take equally as long for the results of your body contouring to be complete.

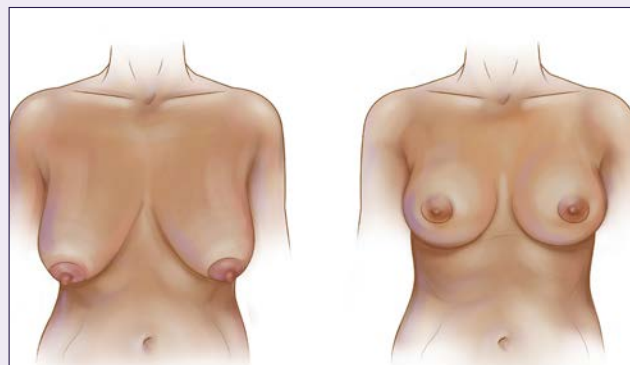
## Lower Body Lift

A complete lower body lift treats sagging buttocks, abdomen, waist, hips, and outer thighs in one procedure. Incision patterns vary and may include a circumferential incision around the body to remove the "belt" of excess skin and fat.



## Breast Lift

The incision patterns for lifting a woman's sagging breasts will be determined based on the amount of excess skin to be removed. These may include one or a combination of incisions in a circular pattern around the areola, in a line extending from the areola to the breast crease, and horizontally along the breast crease. A breast implant also may be recommended to enhance breast shape and size.

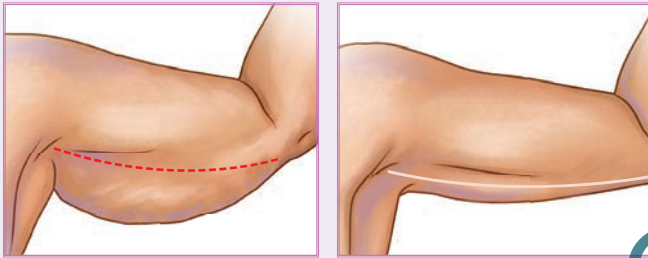


# The Procedure

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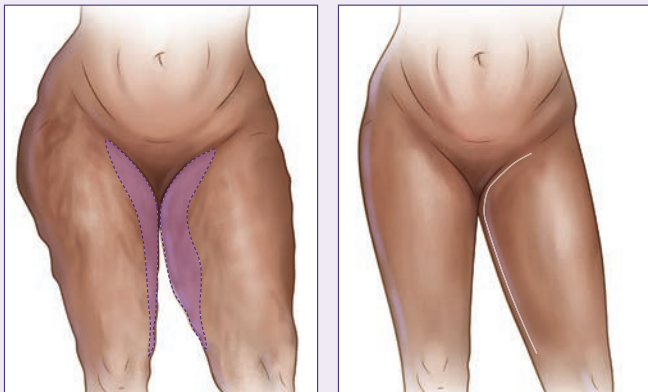
## Arm Lift

Sagging skin in the upper arms is treated with an incision from the underarm area extending along the inside or back of the upper arm. Additional incisions on the arms may be necessary anywhere excess skin has formed sagging pockets. The smoother, tighter contours that result from upper arm contouring are apparent almost immediately, although initially obscured by swelling and bruising. The ultimate scar will be more obvious when the arms are raised.



## Thigh Lift

Reshaping of the thighs is achieved through incisions in the groin that can extend downward to the knee along the inner portion of the thigh. Improving contours of the outer thigh may require an incision extending from the groin around the hip. Through these incisions, your plastic surgeon will tighten tissues for a smoother thigh.



# Risks & Safety

The decision to have body contouring surgery is extremely personal, and you'll have to decide if the benefits will achieve your goals and if the risks and potential complications are acceptable. You will be asked to sign consent forms to ensure that you fully understand the procedure and any risks and potential complications.

## Risks can include:

- Anesthesia risks
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Fluid accumulation
- Poor wound healing
- Skin loss
- Blood clots, deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism
- Excessive or widened scars
- Numbness or other changes in skin sensation
- Unfavorable scarring
- Residual skin laxity or contour irregularity

All risks will be fully discussed prior to your consent. It is important that you address all your questions directly with your plastic surgeon.



# Recovery and Results

Following surgery, dressings or bandages will be applied to your incisions. Small, thin tubes may be temporarily placed under the skin to drain any excess blood or fluid that may collect.

You will be given specific instructions that may include how to care for the surgical site(s), medications to apply or take orally to aid healing and reduce the potential for infection, specific concerns to look for at the surgical site or in your general health, and when to follow up with your plastic surgeon.

You may be instructed to avoid bending, straining, or lifting for up to several weeks. Where tightening of the abdomen or thighs is involved, your plastic surgeon may also instruct you to avoid standing fully upright and stressing any internal sutures as they heal and to sleep with pillows elevating your knees.

To minimize the risk of DVT (blood clots in the legs) you will need to be up and walking as soon as possible and drinking plenty of fluid.

Follow all instructions carefully – this is essential to the success of your outcome.

**Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon specific questions about what you can expect during your individual recovery period.**

- Where will I be taken after my surgery is complete?
- What medication will I be given or prescribed after surgery?
- Will I have dressings/bandages after surgery?
- When will they be removed?
- When can I resume normal activity and exercise?
- When do I return for follow-up care?

**You'll need help.** If a component of your body contouring surgery is performed on an outpatient basis, be sure to arrange for someone to drive you to and from surgery and to stay with you for at least the first night following surgery.

If you experience shortness of breath, chest pain, or unusual heart beats, seek medical attention immediately.

**The results of body contouring following aggressive weight loss are visible almost immediately; however, it can take up to one year to see the final results.** Visible scars are something you must accept in your goals to achieving a body contour that matches your new weight and proportion. The results of body contouring are generally long lasting, provided that you maintain a stable weight and general fitness.

As your body ages, it is natural to lose some firmness. However, most of your initial improvement should be relatively permanent.

**Although good results are expected from your procedure, there is no guarantee.** In some situations, it may not be possible to achieve optimal results with a single surgical procedure and additional surgeries may be necessary.

**Following your physician's instructions is critical to the success of your surgery. It is important that the surgical incisions are not subjected to excessive force, swelling, abrasion, or motion during the time of healing.** Your doctor will give you specific instructions on how to care for yourself, including any medications to apply or take orally to aid healing and reduce the risk of infection.

# Cost

Cost is always a consideration in elective surgery. Prices for body contouring procedures can vary widely. Health insurance may not cover body contouring surgery or its complications. Please consult with your plastic surgeon's office to determine your final fee. Many plastic surgeons offer patient financing plans, so be sure to ask.

## Cost may include:

- Anesthesia fees
- Hospital or surgical facility costs
- Medical tests
- Post-surgery garments
- Prescriptions for medication
- Surgeon's fee



### Your satisfaction involves more than a fee:

When choosing a plastic surgeon for body contouring, remember that the surgeon's experience and your comfort with him or her are just as important as the final cost of the surgery.

# Words to know

- **Areola:** Pigmented skin surrounding the nipple.
- **Arm lift:** A surgical procedure, also known as brachioplasty, to correct sagging of the upper arms.
- **Breast lift:** Also known as mastopexy, surgery to lift the breasts.
- **Breast contouring:** A surgical procedure following massive weight loss to improve shape and tone and remove excess fat and skin.
- **Circumferential incision:** A surgical incision around the body to remove the "belt" of excess skin and fat and additional incisions that may resemble a bikini bottom pattern.
- **General anesthesia:** Drugs and/or gases used during an operation to relieve pain and alter consciousness.
- **Hematoma:** Blood pooling beneath the skin.
- **Intravenous sedation:** Sedatives administered by injection into a vein to help you relax.
- **Local anesthesia:** A drug injected directly to the site of an incision during an operation to relieve pain.
- **Lower body lift:** Surgical procedure to correct sagging of the abdomen, buttocks, groin, and outer thighs.
- **Medial thigh lift:** A surgical procedure to correct sagging of the inner thigh.
- **Outer thigh lift:** A surgical procedure to correct sagging of the outer and mid-thigh.
- **Sutures:** Stitches used by surgeons to hold skin and tissue together.

# Questions to ask my plastic surgeon

- ☐ Are you certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery?
- ☐ Are you a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons?
- ☐ Were you trained specifically in the field of plastic surgery?
- ☐ How many years of plastic surgery training have you had?
- ☐ Do you have hospital privileges to perform this procedure? If so, at which hospitals?
- ☐ Is the office-based surgical facility accredited by a nationally- or state-recognized accrediting agency, or is it state-licensed or Medicare-certified?
- ☐ Am I a good candidate for this procedure?
- ☐ What will be expected of me to get the best results?
- ☐ Where and how will you perform my procedure?
- ☐ What surgical technique is recommended for me?
- ☐ How long of a recovery period can I expect, and what kind of help will I need during my recovery?
- ☐ What are the risks and complications associated with my procedure?
- ☐ How are complications handled?
- ☐ What are my options if I am dissatisfied with the outcome?
- ☐ Do you have before-and-after photos I can look at for this procedure and what results are reasonable for me?

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# Make the Right Choice

Plastic surgery involves many choices. The first and most important is selecting a member of the **American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS)**.

## ASPS member surgeons meet rigorous standards:

- Board certification by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS)® or in Canada by The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada®
- Complete at least six years of surgical training following medical school with a minimum of three years of plastic surgery residency training
- Pass comprehensive oral and written exams
- Graduate from an accredited medical school
- Complete continuing medical education, including patient safety each year
- Perform surgery in accredited, state-licensed, or Medicare-certified surgical facilities

## Do not be confused by other official-sounding boards and certifications.

The ABPS is recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), which has approved medical specialty boards since 1934. There is no ABMS-recognized certifying board with “cosmetic surgery” in its name. By choosing a member of The American Society of Plastic Surgeons, you can be assured that you are choosing a qualified, highly trained plastic surgeon who is board certified by the ABPS or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.





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