

TULSA SURGICAL ARTS

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Tummy Tuck (Abdominoplasty)

PLAIN-LANGUAGE PATIENT GUIDE

What this surgery is

A tummy tuck flattens the belly. It removes loose, hanging skin that diet and exercise cannot fix. It also repairs stretched or separated belly muscles, common after pregnancy.

It is not a weight-loss surgery. It works best when your weight is stable.

What happens during it

1. You get anesthesia (medicine that makes you sleep).
2. The surgeon makes a long cut low on the belly, hidden below the underwear line.
3. The skin is lifted, and the stretched muscles are stitched back together down the middle.
4. Extra skin is removed. The belly button is brought out through a new small opening.
5. The cuts are closed in layers. Thin drain tubes are sometimes placed for a few days.
6. Surgery takes two to three hours. Some patients stay one night.

Main risks

Every surgery has risks. Here are the main ones for this surgery, in plain words. We will go over all of them with you in person.

- Fluid buildup under the skin (called a seroma). It may need to be drained with a needle in the office.
- Slow wound healing at the middle of the scar, especially in smokers.
- Blood clots. The risk is higher after a tummy tuck than most cosmetic surgeries. Early walking lowers it.
- Long-lasting numbness of the lower belly skin.
- Bleeding. Some bleeding can need another trip to the operating room.

- Infection. Signs are spreading redness, warmth, pus, or fever.
- Scars. Every cut leaves a scar. Most fade over a year. Some stay raised or wide.
- Numb skin near the cuts. Feeling usually returns over months. Small areas can stay numb.
- Blood clots in the legs. A clot can travel to the lungs. That is an emergency.
- Problems from anesthesia (the medicine that makes you sleep). These are rare in healthy people.
- Uneven results. The two sides of the body are never a perfect match.
- The need for another surgery to fix a problem or improve the result.

What recovery is like

First few days

You walk bent at the hips. Soreness is real but managed. Walk a little every few hours.

One week

Standing straighter each day. Drains, if used, usually come out.

Two weeks

Most desk workers return. No lifting over ten pounds.

Six weeks

Core exercise and full workouts restart. Swelling keeps fading for months.

One year

The scar fades and flattens.

When to call us right away

In any emergency, call 911 first.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department now — do not drive yourself, do not wait:

- Chest pain or pressure, shortness of breath, or trouble breathing.
- Fainting, sudden confusion, or weakness on one side of the body.
- You have chest pain or trouble breathing.

- One leg swells, or one calf hurts more than the other.
- Blood soaks a bandage and does not slow down with gentle pressure.

Otherwise call us at 918-392-7900, day or night, if:

- A growing bulge of fluid or blood under the skin of the belly.
- You have a fever of 101.5°F (38.6°C) or higher.
- Redness spreads out from a cut, or you see pus.
- Your pain gets much worse instead of better.
- A wound pulls open, or stitches come apart.

Reviewed and approved by Austin Kluis, MD — 2026-08-23.

This guide is for general learning only. It is not medical advice for you. Your plan may differ. Always follow the instructions your surgeon gives you.