



PATIENT INFORMATION

Post Massive Weight Loss

OVERVIEW

Patients who lose a significant amount of weight can often be left with residual problems as a result of excessively loose skin. The weight loss may be achieved through lifestyle modification such as diet and exercise or through bariatric surgery (Gastric band, Gastric sleeve “stomach stapling” or gastric bypass surgery). The base for the Medicare definition of massive weight loss is a BMI (Body Mass Index) drop of 5 (approximately 13-15 kg for most people) but is often significantly more than this.

COMMON REASONS WHY PEOPLE CONSIDER SURGERY

Whilst the significant weight loss is undoubtedly a significant health benefit the consequences can be quite substantial. The residual skin varies a great deal from person to person in the area affected and different people have areas that worry them more or less.

Typically the problems can involve - day to day hygiene in skin folds. Risk of skin breakdown, infections, rashes and chaffing.

- Difficulty finding clothing that fits and that isn't “tent like”
- Problems with exercising
- General body image/appearance concerns
- Impact on socialisation

AREAS AFFECTED

- Arms (Saggy, “Tuck shop arms”, “Bingo wings”)
- Breasts (typically are very stretched and/or empty)
- Abdomen/Tummy
- Back (Either higher up at bra strap level or lower down in the mid back)
- Buttocks (Drop, may appear flat or empty)
- Thighs (Can rub together, sag)
- Face (Sags and loses volume)
- Miscellaneous areas

WHAT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE

Probably more than any other area the spectrum of interventions need to be tailored to your specific situation. It is often multistage addressing those areas of concern most to you sequentially.

Conservative:	Basic skin hygiene techniques, Maintaining good diet and exercise, clothing options etc
Arms/Brachioplasty:	Excision of the excess skin and fat, tightening the upper arm. There is a long scar on the inside of the arm from elbow to axilla/armpit
Breasts:	Breast lift/reduction (Mammoplasty) sometimes in combination with a breast implant (Augmentation Mastopexy)
Abdominoplasty/Tummy Tuck:	
Bodylift:	Very commonly used to address abdomen (Tummy) and excess skin over lower back/buttock lift
Thigh Reduction	Generally best addressing the upper inner thigh with a scar located there
Liposuction	Generally used in conjunction with above procedures rather than stand alone



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WHAT ARE THE REALITIES OF THIS TYPE OF SURGERY?

- In most instances the body has not returned to “normal” after significant weight loss.
- The skin is poor quality and behaves more like Pizza Dough than an elastic band.
- This type of surgery is generally more like salvage or reconstructive surgery than the more typical cosmetic type procedures in similar areas.
- There are long scars which may become uneven or asymmetrical.
- There will often be residual stretch marks
- Significant amount of aftercare and follow up is required
- Drain tubes will stay for longer
- There is a higher risk of needing blood transfusions
- Revisions or “touch ups” are quite common

SURGICAL GOALS

Your safety comes first.

Beyond this the goals we try to achieve with you are to address the significant symptoms and issues you first present with. Be with you through your journey and arrive at an end stage where you feel much more comfortable in your own skin.

We will aim to make the final scars and appearance as inconspicuous as possible.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE UNDERTAKING POST WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY

- Weight loss stable for at least 6 months. This needs to have plateaued where you can reasonably keep it with your current lifestyle
- DO NOT SMOKE. Smoking is a significant risk to all aspects of surgery but especially in large body operations. Wound complications are significantly higher and lead to prolonged hospitalisation, repeat surgery and increased risks of infection and tissue loss/death
- Appropriate level of private insurance. Self insuring is very, very expensive in this area of surgery
- Timing of pregnancies
- Breast screening/mammograms up to date
- Time required off Work/School/Exercise
- Supports at home

RISKS AND RECOVERY

Like all surgery there are risks involved. The specifics vary between the different operations and this like the recovery aspects will be better defined at your consultation with A/Prof White

Please note - This information sheet is provided as a general guide only. The specific circumstances of your condition need to be discussed with A/Prof Dean White.