



# Flat Tummies for Yummy Mummies

For some women the memory of a taut, toned stomach is so distant it's hard to recall how simple life was back then. In those days there wasn't the same difficult "what shall I wear" dilemma. Jeans looked better; tops could be tighter, shorter, and brighter.

Often after pregnancy, weight loss or just plain ageing, men and women alike find themselves with excess skin and fat around the belly and decreased strength and tone of the muscles beneath. In some cases, the abdomen may have been stretched to a point where dieting and exercise appear to have limited or no effect on improving its appearance.

An abdominoplasty, or tummy tuck, offers a solution and aims to restore that flat, toned tummy again. Various surgical options are available and Mr Liew, consultant plastic surgeon works closely with his patients to develop an operative plan individual to them.

If most of the problem is below the navel, a mini-abdominoplasty can be performed, which results in shorter scars. In other cases, abdominoplasty is combined with liposuction for further fat removal and body/waist contouring. If your skin is firm and elastic, liposuction alone may be enough. However, if the skin is loose and flabby, and the problem is both above and below the navel, then a full abdominoplasty might be the best option. Patients who have large amounts of excess skin extending over the hip and waist may benefit from circumferential skin removal.

## The Tummy Tuck Procedure

During the 90-minute operation an incision is made within the 'bikini' or 'boxer' line under the abdomen; this helps to hide the scar under clothes following the procedure. Excess skin and fat are removed, the muscle beneath is tightened and sometimes repaired (by sewing together the two long bands of abdominals with thick thread), the skin is pulled down and often the belly button is moved to a new position within the newly contoured abdomen.

The procedure is performed under general anaesthetic. Long-acting local anaesthetic is also administered as part of the procedure to help reduce any post-operative pain. Most patients return to work about ten to fourteen days after surgery. Small plastic tube drains are used to remove excess fluid and these may be in place for several days following surgery. There may be some bruising for a week or so and some swelling for a few weeks but once the scars settle they usually end up as white lines.

## Case Study

"In July last year, I changed my life", says Jackie, 53, from Liverpool. After the birth of twins, weighing 6 ½ lbs each several years ago, Jackie was left with stomach muscles that had stretched beyond natural repair. "I still looked pregnant and it was very depressing. I dressed in baggy tops to cover the bulge and avoided being seen naked or in underwear (even by my husband) and I would brace myself for the "When's the baby due?" comments.

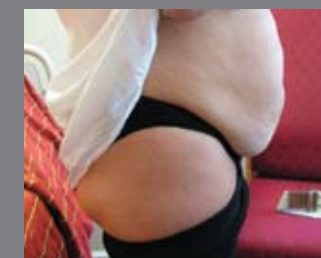
After exercising the skin just seemed to look worse and it made no difference to my stomach. I wasn't particularly overweight but I had this horrid bulge over my stomach, which made me feel really self-conscious. I had to do something about it as I felt it was ruining my life.

I looked into tummy tucks via the Evergreen Clinic in Aigburth and they recommended Mr Liew, at Spire Liverpool Hospital. Having checked his qualifications I booked my first consultation with him and I immediately felt reassured that he was the right consultant for me. I was also comforted by the fact that Spire Liverpool Hospital has no MRSA and very low infection rates.

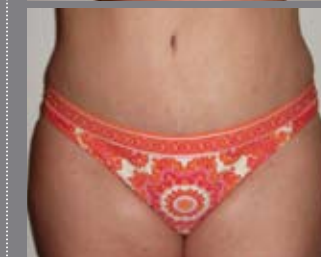
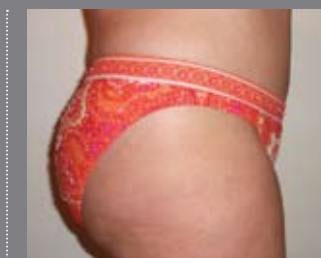
I regularly questioned myself with thoughts of "is a flat tummy really worth the price of a new car?", and, of course, "is a flat tummy worth the risk of surgery?" However, Mr Liew clearly explained the options to me and I felt confident I was making the right decision by opting for a full abdominoplasty.

"When I see myself in the mirror I can't stop staring. I have a flat, hard tummy and - for the first time I can remember - a waist."

... says Jackie



Jackie's tummy before abdominoplasty



Jackie's tummy after abdominoplasty

On the day of my surgery I checked in to Spire Liverpool Hospital, full of hope and anticipation. A few hours later I woke up to a new me. Obviously my stomach was bandaged up, but even with that, I could already see there was less of it. It wasn't half as painful as I'd expected it to be, in fact, not painful at all and within two days I was back home. A few days later, I returned to hospital for a check-up and the nerve-racking experience of watching a nurse slowly peel off my dressings and replace them with new ones. But it was fine and I just had to take it easy for a couple of weeks - within six weeks I was fully recovered.

I now feel younger, healthier and stronger. My stomach hasn't been so flat for years. When I see myself in the mirror I can't stop staring. I have a flat, hard tummy and - for the first time I can remember - a waist. My scar is barely visible now and I can't wait to wear a bikini this summer.

Initially my family were a little reluctant for me to have the operation, but they can now really appreciate what a positive experience this has been for me and as for my husband, well, he loves his newly-improved, confident wife!

Mr Liew has advised me my new flat tummy should remain taut as long as I maintain a healthy weight. Would I recommend it? You bet!"

With regards to post operative care, most patients stay for two nights after surgery. The first week after surgery, the abdomen will feel a bit tight and you may not be able to stand straight. By the second week, you should be able to do most light, routine activities and also get back to work (depending on what you do e.g. no heavy lifting). By six weeks, patients can generally go back to normal activities.

For more information regarding Mr Liew or Spire Liverpool Hospital's cosmetic surgery options call Jane Gavin

**Tel 0151 522 1805**  
or visit  
[www.spirehealthcare.com/liverpool](http://www.spirehealthcare.com/liverpool)

