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**WHERE ARE
THEY NOW?**
Catching up with
old OH friends



BMI & SUCCESS

What new research suggests

**WEIGHING
YOUR OPTIONS**

Which band is right for you?

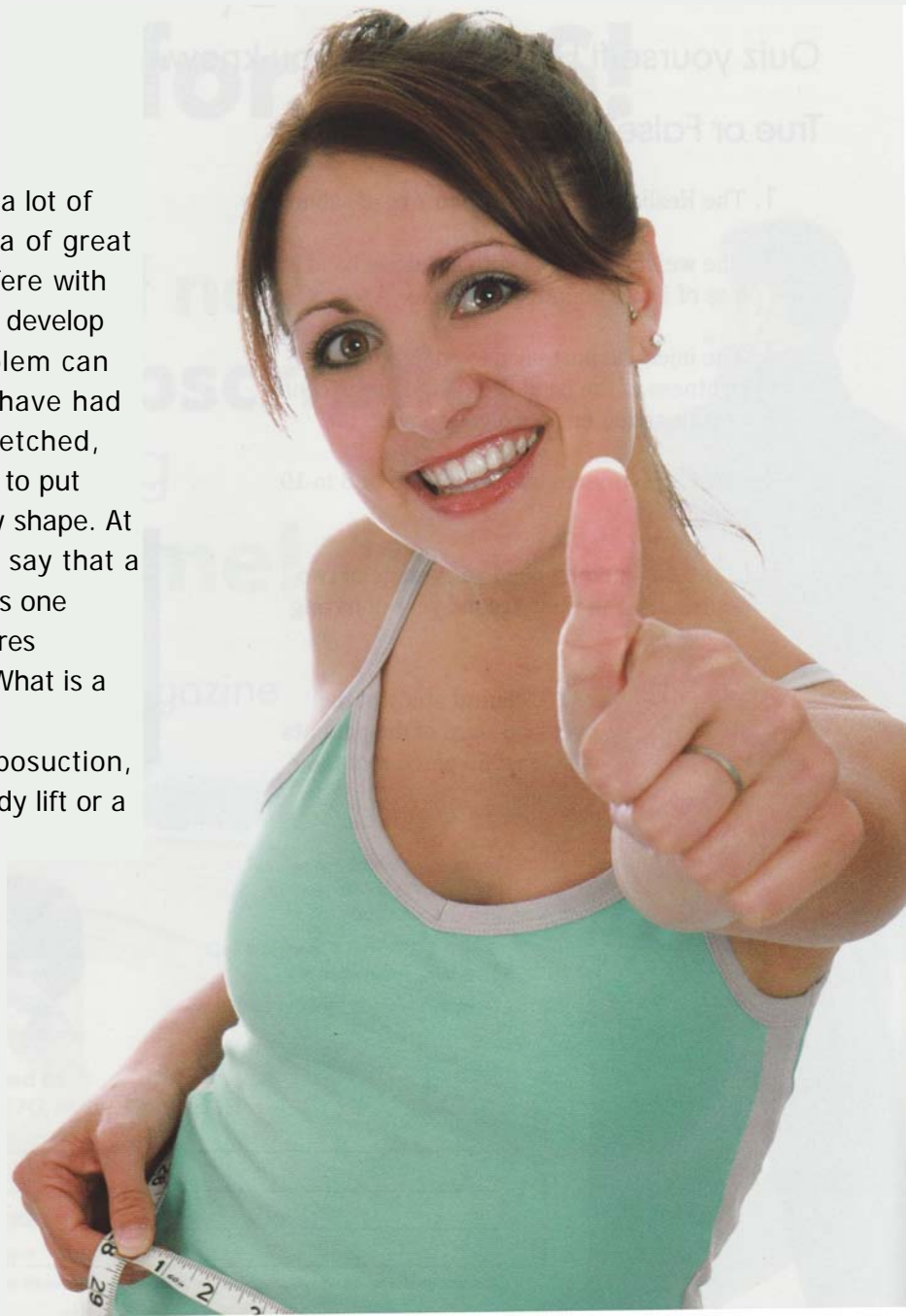
KID TALK

Feeding your child's
self-esteem

IS IT TUMMY TUCK TIME?

Abdominal Surgery after Weight Loss

For many patients who have lost a lot of weight, the abdomen is an area of great concern. Excess skin may interfere with wearing clothing and rashes may develop below the folds of skin. The problem can be aggravated in women who have had children; if the muscles are stretched, no amount of exercise is going to put them back to their pre-pregnancy shape. At first glance, it may seem easy to say that a tummy tuck is the answer, but as one starts to learn about the procedures available, more questions arise. What is a mini tummy tuck? What is a panniculectomy? Can I have liposuction, or should I consider a lower body lift or a tummy tuck?



First, let's define the terms. A panniculectomy removes only the apron of skin and fat that hangs below the pubic area. In general, this is considered a reconstructive procedure and is performed for patients who have large aprons. This can be done before weight loss surgery to increase a patient's mobility, or after weight loss surgery when the patient has a large apron that makes hygiene difficult.

After large amounts of weight loss, most patients want to consider an abdominoplasty, not a panniculectomy. An abdominoplasty (in lay language, a tummy tuck) not only removes the skin and fat of the lower abdomen, but also tightens the underlying muscles. This is usually considered a cosmetic operation and is not covered by insurance. A mini-tummy tuck only addresses the skin and fat of the lower abdomen (below the belly button) and does not involve tightening the muscles.

For most patients who have lost significant amounts of weight, liposuction will not be the answer. Liposuction only removes fat; it does not remove excess skin. Loose skin may actually be worse after liposuction, and this should be a topic of discussion with your doctor before surgery. Sometimes liposuction is done on the sides or end of the incision at the same time as an abdominoplasty for patients with fullness in this area, but again this may not be needed for some patients.

Although the lower body lift is ideal for some patients, it is not for everyone. If patients only have laxity in the anterior abdomen or tummy area, then a tummy tuck would be the best option. It is very possible to do a tummy tuck first and then later do the back part of a lower body lift. This is an option many patients have chosen for a variety of reasons, including time off work, financial concerns and other priorities. The most important criterion in deciding which procedure to do first is what matters to you most. Some patients might eventually wish to have a lower body lift, but their arms bother them the most. For these patients, an abdominoplasty and an arm lift (brachioplasty) would be the first surgery, with the posterior part of a body lift done at the second stage.

An abdominoplasty usually takes about three hours. The surgery can be done either as an outpatient procedure or with an overnight stay in a hospital or aftercare facility. I prefer patients to spend a night in an aftercare facility so that I can check on them the next morning before the drive home. I would encourage

patients to consider spending at least one night in a monitored facility for safety's sake as well as their own comfort.

The most painful part of an abdominoplasty is where the muscles are tightened up. I have found a pain pump, such as the ON-Q system, very helpful in minimizing post-operative discomfort. Drains are used and are generally in place for a week to 10 days after the surgery. They are very necessary evil; patients do not like them, but they drain fluid that can accumulate and possibly disrupt the healing process. Most patients are back to a light schedule within two weeks of the surgery, and it usually takes about six weeks before they can resume all of their regular activities, including strenuous exercise.

The results of a tummy tuck can be very striking, especially for patients who have lost a lot of weight around the abdominal area. The flatter contour will quickly be apparent, although it may take several months for the final results.

Abdominoplasty

- Removes localized lower abdominal fat
- Tightens loose skin of the lower abdomen
- Tightens muscles of the abdominal wall stretched by pregnancy or weight loss

Definitions

Abdominoplasty: a procedure that tightens the abdominal area by removing excess skin and fat and tightening the underlying muscles

Panniculectomy: a procedure that removes the overhanging apron of skin and fat

Lower Body Lift: a circumferential procedure that removes excess skin and fat in a circular manner around the trunk and also can tighten the lateral thighs



Susan Downey, MD, is a board-certified plastic surgeon in Los Angeles and co-chair of the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery's Bariatric Task Force.