



# WATERFRONT

PRIVATE HOSPITAL

## TUMMY TUCK AFTERCARE

The advice below is general and will apply to the average patient. It should be a guide. All patients are different, and some will recover quicker than others.

### Before you leave the hospital

**Medications** – You will be provided with painkillers before discharge. These will usually include strong painkillers such as dihydrocodeine.

**Follow-up appointments** for dressing clinics – You will be handed a card with details of your first follow-up appointment and contact details for the ward if you have any concerns once you get home.

Have someone to take you home and a **responsible adult with you for the first night**.

### When you get home

#### Week 1

**Get plenty of rest, but mobilise (walking around the house/ flat)** as soon as possible; this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.

You will be bent over when walking as everything will feel tight – this will ease towards the end of the week.

**Wear your compression stockings** for at least 3 weeks following your surgery



**Sleep comfortably on two or three pillows.** You need not sleep propped upright. (Avoid sleeping on your tummy for at least three weeks).

**Take your pain medication as prescribed.**

**Discomfort and Pain** are typical in the first few days after surgery, but often, this is not as bad as expected. The pain will be worse if your muscles have been tightened.

**You can shower,** but try not to soak your dressings too much. Do not worry if the outer dressings come off. You will still have paper (steri-strips) or glue tape over the wounds; you can get these wet. They will generally stay stuck on your incisions.

**Keep your new belly button clean** – this will have been exposed before you left the hospital, and you can keep it clean with a cotton earbud, soap, and water.

A little **blood staining** on the inside of your dressings is not unusual during the first week.

Your **mood** may fluctuate after surgery – this is normal!

Your tummy will feel **tight and swollen** for several days and weeks, and **bruising** is not uncommon. This will settle gradually over the first few weeks.

**Follow a balanced diet.** Increase fluid intake. Decreased activity may promote constipation, so you may wish to add more raw fruit and fibre to your diet. **Consider taking lactulose** to help keep your stools soft.

**Avoid smoking** for at least two weeks, as smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

**Avoid alcohol** when taking pain medications. Even if you are not taking pain medications, it is advisable to avoid alcohol for three weeks as it can cause fluid retention, which may worsen swelling.

**Avoid any heavy lifting.**

## Compression garments

**You DO NOT need a compression garment.** There is no evidence that compression garments improve outcomes in tummy tuck surgery, and there is evidence to suggest that if a garment is too tight, it can increase the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis. Garments can also restrict your movement if they do not fit correctly.

Some patients prefer to wear a garment, and you can do so if you wish. It should not be uncomfortable or too tight.

Links for recommended garments for a tummy tuck can be found below:

[Lipoelastic VH variant](#)

[Lipoelastic VH special comfort](#)

[Macom side fastening girdle](#)

Please check the websites carefully for sizing instructions. You can use discount code QUABA at checkout. We have no affiliations with any company.

## Nurse appointment at the end of week 1

You will have a nurse appointment to **remove the outer dressings** at the end of week 1. The nurses will check you are OK and have no problems. They can answer any questions.

The **paper tape (steri-strips)** or **glue tape** covering the incisions **will generally be left on, and you can continue to shower with these on.**

You may have **non-dissolvable stitches** around your **belly button**, which will be removed.

## Week 2

Continue taking **painkillers** if required.

Continue **showering** and keeping the wounds clean.

The tightness should be starting to ease, and you should be able to **walk more upright** over the second week (this can take much longer if your muscles have been tightened).

Your tummy will still feel **swollen/ bloated**, which can vary over the day.

You may still have a little **bruising**, especially at the flanks (if you have had liposuction in that area). You should not have much bruising at the front of your tummy.

You should continue to take things easy but **keep mobile** simultaneously.

**Please remember to remove your paper tape (steri-strips) by the end of week 2.** If the tape is stuck, you can coat it with Vaseline and wait for half an hour before removing it.

If you have **glue tape**, this should be left on for three weeks and can be covered with Vaseline beforehand to help get it off.

**You can consider driving** if you must towards the end of the second week if you are not taking strong painkillers and are confident performing an emergency break.

***Avoid any heavy lifting.***

***You DO NOT need a compression garment.***

## **Returning to work**

**Return to work** may be an option at the start of week two if your job is office based/non-physical. If your job is more physical, you may need to wait 2-3 weeks before returning to work.

## **Weeks 3 and 4**

**If you have glue tape over your wounds – remove it at the end of the third week** – the nurses may arrange for you to come in to do this.

**If your wounds are dry, you can moisturise** your incisions with a plain moisturising cream (Aveeno, E45) or bio-oil.

You will feel more yourself, but your tummy may still be swollen. You should be walking upright.

There should be no significant bruising.

## **When can I fly after surgery?**

Check with your airline and insurance company before flying. It'll depend on your airline's regulations and the flight duration. If in doubt, please ask your surgeon.

### **Risk of DVT**

If you're flying after recent surgery, especially when your mobility has been restricted, you're at an increased risk of [deep vein thrombosis \(DVT\)](#), a blood clot in one of the deep veins in your body, usually in your legs.

## Guidance

For medium-haul (3-6 hours) and long-haul (6-12 hours) and as a guide, allow at least **3 weeks** after tummy tuck surgery. You could fly around 2 weeks after surgery for short haul (less than 3 hours) flights. You can take steps to reduce your risk of DVT, such as drinking plenty of water, using your Ted stockings, and moving around on the plane. The risk of developing a travel-related DVT is low, even if you're classed as moderate to high risk.

## Travel Insurance

Check your travel insurance policy carefully, as you may need to inform the insurance company you have recently had surgery.

## Weeks 5 and 6

**After 1 month** (beginning of week 5), you can cover your scars with micropore tape (Micropore 3M), which can be purchased from most pharmacies. **You can shower with the tape on.**

You can still expect some swelling during this period, but it should start settling significantly.

## Scar care

**Apply the micropore tape for 3-5 days**, then remove it and **moisturise** the wounds with a plain moisturiser. **Leave exposed for 1-2 days**, reapply the tape for another 3-5 days, and keep repeating the moisturise/ tape cycle for at least 4 months.

Tape - 3-5 days

Moisturise - 1-2 days

Tape 3-5 days

Moisturise 1-2 days

Keep repeating for 4 months.

**If the tape irritates, please stop using it and moisturise only.**

## Exercise

**You can resume gentle exercise after 6 weeks.** You will have more flexibility if your muscles have not been tightened.

**Running and cycling** can be started after 6 weeks, but **swimming** should be avoided for 3 months. Heavy exercise (that places demand on your abdominal muscles) and sit-ups should be avoided for 6 months if your muscles have been tightened.

## From 6 weeks to 6 months

The last 10% or so of the swelling will settle over this period, and your tummy will feel more natural. It will take the full 6 months for things to settle down.

**Scars** should start to fade but can still be red at 6 months. Please **continue alternating between moisturising and taping your scars.**

**Shooting pains and other pains** may persist as nerves heal or after exercise. This is normal.

## When to call/ get in touch

- If you have **increased swelling or bruising**, which is not settling.
- If you notice swelling in one/ both of your legs or feel short of breath – this may indicate a clot in one of your veins/ lungs – Deep vein thrombosis/ Pulmonary embolism.
- If one side of your tummy is much more swollen than the other.

- If you have increased redness along the incision (this may be a sign of infection).
- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications, such as rash, nausea, headache, or vomiting.
- If you have a temperature over 38 degrees Celsius.
- If you have any **persistent** yellowish or greenish discharge from the incisions.

**If concerned, please get in touch with the hospital where your procedure was performed.**

### **Further advice**

If you are uncertain about anything or require further advice, please contact us at [hello@waterfronthospital.co.uk](mailto:hello@waterfronthospital.co.uk)