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Middle Ground

Find your ideal abs,
no matter where they went
Bonnie Staring

Muffin tops, belly rolls, wiggle rooms—whatever the pet name, the extra bit around the middle leaves many women dissatisfied with the appearance of their abdominals. Whether due to aging, a dramatic weight loss or childbirth, obtaining or maintaining a sleek abdominal area can be a challenge. To help you connect with your ideal abs, we've explored the current treatment options available and checked in with top industry professionals for their ab-solute best advice.

DEMYSTIFYING MIDDLE MYTHS

"Many patients look at a tummy tuck or liposuction as a weight-loss tool when that simply isn't the case," explains Dr. Jerome Edelstein, MD, FRCSC, a plastic surgeon based in Toronto. While both procedures can improve the appearance of the abdominal area, they aren't a quick-fix, no-diet solution. In fact, the closer patients are to their ideal body weight, the better the results. "As a general guideline, my patients need to have a body mass index of less than 25 before I'll consider them as a good candidate," he adds. "In most cases, the person needs to lose weight in traditional ways first."

Most abdominal procedures deal with tightening loose skin, tightening loose muscles, eliminating excess skin, body contouring (to get rid of excess fat) or a combination of these.

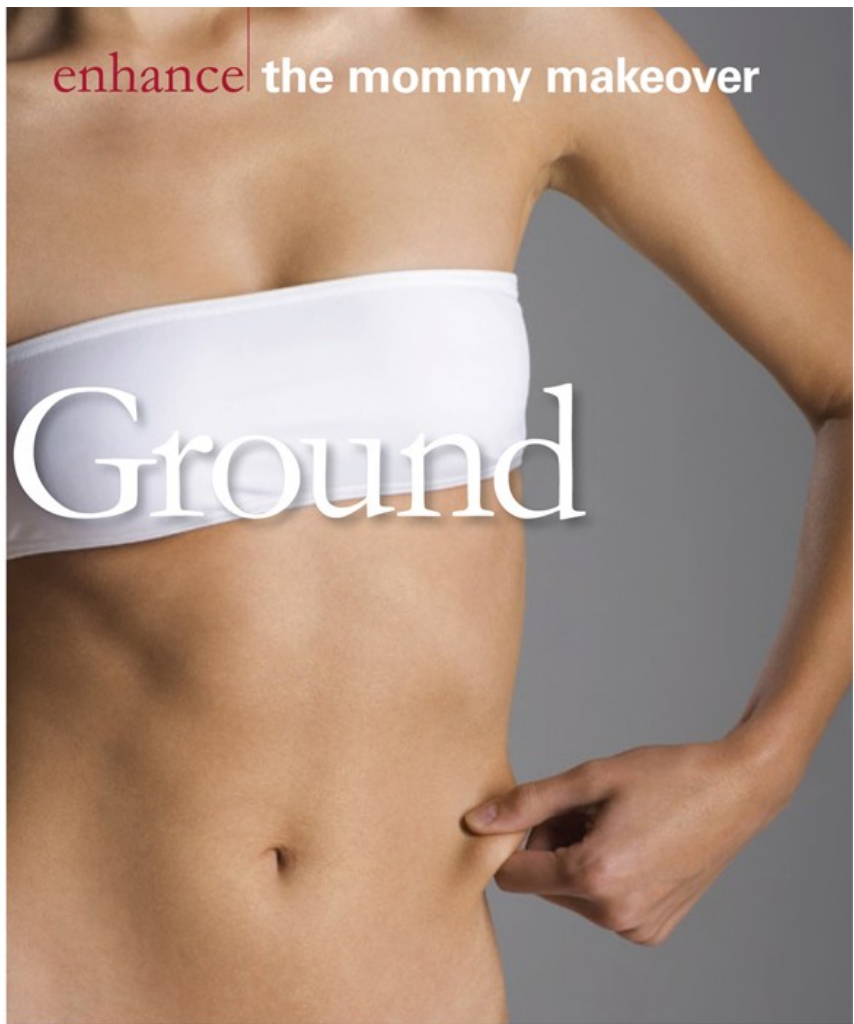
PROBLEM: POST-PREGNANCY PAUNCH

Having children is a rewarding experience that wreaks havoc on the abdominal area. A mother's muscles and skin strain and stretch to accommodate that growing bundle of joy, which leaves behind a tummy that, despite diet and exercise, resists reverting back to its pre-pregnancy glory.

SOLUTIONS: TUMMY TUCK, MINI-TUCK AND/OR BODY CONTOURING

Abdominoplasty (a tummy tuck) is the most common surgical procedure that involves a combination of the removal of excess

enhance the mommy makeover



fat and skin, and a tightening of the abdominal muscles. A full tummy tuck deals with the areas above and below the navel, while a mini-tuck focuses only on the area below the navel.

"A proper assessment is key before selecting the ideal procedure for a patient," advises [Dr. William Middleton, BSc, MD, FRCSC\(C\)](#), of Advanced Laser and Cosmetic Surgery Clinic in Toronto. "As well, a patient should assess the surgeon to ensure that he/she is ideal." He recommends that prospective patients take their consultation seriously and ask to see before-and-after photos and check referrals. "After all, it's your body—and it's the only one you have."

PROBLEM: THE FAT THAT ISN'T GOING AWAY

For some people, no matter how many crunches they do, kilometres they run or healthy meals they prepare, they're still struggling to get rid of stubborn areas of fat around their middles. "Our desire to obtain a flat, toned and attractive abdomen is at odds with certain powerful tendencies dictated by Mother Nature," says Dr. Peter Bray, MD, MSc, FRCSC(C) of Elements Wellness & Medispa in Toronto. "The abdominal area is prone to fat accumulation, which is further challenged by a sedentary lifestyle."

SOLUTION: BODY CONTOURING

Body contouring treatments range from surgical procedures such as liposuction to minimally invasive treatments such as BodyTite. "There is a limit to the amount of fat that can be safely removed from an area, no matter what the procedure," ►

advises **Dr. Middleton**. The goal is to shape the area in a consistent manner to produce the best results.

BodyTite uses a technology called Radio-Frequency Assisted Liposuction to apply precisely directed high-frequency energy to the treatment area, causing the fat to melt and the skin matrix to contract. “Patients can ultimately expect a reduction in the thickness of fat tissue and a tighter appearance in the treatment area and less downtime as with traditional liposuction,” explains Dr. Bray. “The deep heating from within during treatment will contract and firm the area.”

For a non-invasive procedure, **Dr. Middleton** recommends the UltraShape body contouring system, which uses ultrasound energy to target fat cells. “It’s especially effective on love handles and fat on the abdomen and outer thigh, and patients experience no downtime,” he adds. Most patients require three to six sessions.

PROBLEM: SAGGING SKIN

Usually caused by weight loss, sagging skin no longer has the elasticity to bounce back to the body’s now-skinny shape. Older skin can also sag in the abdominal area, creating the appearance of a bulky belly.

SOLUTION: MINI-TUCK, BODY CONTOURING AND/OR SKIN TIGHTENING

“The procedure depends entirely on the condition of the patient, since you want to be as close to your ideal weight before your surgery” advises Dr. Edelstein. “If a patient is planning to lose more weight, he or she should do that first.” For those close to their ideal weight, they have options.

“A side benefit of a mini-tuck is the removal of unsightly stretch marks,” says **Dr. Middleton**. “They’re not just smoothed away—they’re gone.” For those who prefer a less-invasive route, BodyTite treatments can also help tighten the skin. “One thing patients appreciate is not having the long scar associated with a tummy tuck,” explains Dr. Bray. “Plus, recovery after BodyTite is a relatively rapid and comfortable process.” **E**



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For a full guide of invasive and non-invasive body contouring treatments, go to elevatemagazine.com

Tone at Home

Whether post-procedure or in preparation for one, our experts offer these tips for toning and trimming the abdominal area.

STAY HYDRATED—There’s no better way to maintain the health and elasticity of your skin, notes Dr. Middleton.

CUT BACK ON THE SALT—It’s a small change, but it can make a difference.

GET MOVING—Your abs consist of four muscle groups, and sit-ups only work out one of them. “A consultation with a personal trainer to develop a body core-conditioning program is a great way to learn how to strengthen all of your abdominal muscles,” says Dr. Bray.

THINK OUTSIDE THE OPS—“The procedure isn’t what’s going to continue to make your body improve, it’s how you treat it after that will,” says Dr. Edelstein. “A healthy lifestyle pre- and post-op is the best thing you can do.”

STILL NEED INSPIRATION? “Reducing the thickness of the fat layer will improve the contour of the abdomen and allow the hard-won abdominal muscles to show through,” explains Dr. Bray. So sign up for that class, clear out the cupboards and take an active role with your ab-fab new you.