

Understanding the Tummy Tuck

Hilda is a 35-year-old woman who had her third (and last) child a little over a year ago. She jogs regularly, eats a healthy, low-fat diet and does not smoke. Despite being in overall good physical condition, she's bothered by her "pot belly," which just won't seem to go away no matter how much she exercises.

Ken, on the other hand, was seriously overweight for many years, until he recently lost more than ninety kilograms through a doctor-approved diet and fitness program. Now he feels better than he ever has before, and his cholesterol levels and blood sugar have returned to healthy levels. But he still carries the excess skin from his dramatic weight loss, and it makes bathing, hygiene and exercise difficult – plus he's very self-conscious about still appearing heavier than he really is.

Both of these people are candidates for [abdominoplasty](#) — also known as the tummy tuck — but obviously, their cases are not the same. Will the same treatment work for both of them? It's a good sign that neither of these patients is seeking abdominoplasty as a substitute for weight loss; instead they're looking for an appropriate way to complete their journey back to feeling good about their bodies.

The first step for each, of course, is to consult with a board-certified plastic surgeon who specializes in abdominoplasty. During these consultations, they learn that there are two basic types of abdominoplasty: "full" and "mini."

In a full tummy tuck (which is the kind performed most frequently), the surgeon removes excess skin and fat from the belly area, and tightens the abdominal wall by repairing muscles which have separated under pressure. In most cases, up to 50% of the abdominal skin is removed and the remaining skin stretched and tightened to create a smoother appearance. The surgeon then creates a new navel for the patient, using any one of a variety of sculpting techniques. Full abdominoplasty leaves a long horizontal scar (similar to that of a C-section) that can take up to a full year to fade.

A [mini tummy tuck](#), on the other hand, tightens only the portion of the abdomen below the belly button, without affecting the muscles. This involves a short horizontal incision across the lower abdomen (about half the length of a full abdominoplasty scar), and the belly button and upper abdomen are left intact. Both procedures may be combined with [liposuction](#) for best results.

So which patient should have which procedure? It's impossible to say for certain without confirming the choice with a board-certified plastic surgeon, but Ken is likely to benefit most for a full tummy tuck, since his abdominal muscles have been weakened by intense pressure from excessive weight. Hilda's main area of concern is the skin and fat of her lower abdomen only... though she'd also like to get rid of her stretch marks, which a mini tummy tuck will not do.

She'll make her choice based on her plastic surgeon's recommendation, after a full assessment of her health history and goals.

If you're ready to learn more about which type of abdominoplasty is right for you, you can use the ISAPS website to [find a board-certified plastic surgeon](#) who can help you achieve the body you want. Once you undergo either type of abdominoplasty, you'll have a recovery period of at least four weeks, during which you will likely need to wear a compression garment. It may take anywhere from four to six weeks to see the final results — results which you've worked hard for in so many ways. Your belly scars will eventually be surreptitious enough to wear a bathing suit, so you can get out and enjoy showing off your smoother, flatter tummy. You've earned it!