



## **Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)**

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Body Lifts

### **How do I get started?**

It is important prior to surgery for patients to spend some time educating themselves about the pros and cons of body lifts (extended abdominoplasty). Although patients who undergo body lifts are typically very happy, this elective operation is not for everybody. The big risks of surgery are pain, infection, bleeding, delayed healing, and scarring. Read the educational materials provided and on our website including consent forms prior to your surgery. Make sure that your surgeon is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) and American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS). Please check out websites and links at: [www.drjlowe.com](http://www.drjlowe.com)

### **Do I need a body lift?**

Patients who have had major weight changes, child birth, skin and soft tissue redundancy, or over 40 years of age may be candidates for a body lift. Patients considering body lifts need to decide if the risks are worth it or not? Some patients look better with a small bit of skin redundancy than with a full body lift scar. In most cases, the need for a body lift is obvious, but in other cases it may not be clear. Patients are typically concerned about constant bulging, lower abdominal and flank fullness, and skin overlap at the waist and hips. Patients not planning future pregnancy with stable weight are the best candidates. Patients with significant skin around the waist or lateral thigh often seen after major weight loss may require an inner or outer thigh lift or mid-trunk lifts as well. Some patients choose a standard tummy tuck with liposuction over a body lift due to concerns about the scar length, surgical risks, and recovery. Dr. Lowe always combines liposuction during body lifts to ensure the best results. A frank discussion with a board certified plastic surgeon will help patients make the right decision.

### **Are body lifts covered by health insurance?**

Body lifts by definition are cosmetic surgery procedures. The procedure is not covered by medical insurance plans. Some patients have large abdominal pannus or abdominal roll resulting in physical limitation and chronic rash. These patients may be candidates for pannus removal to address this medical problem. A pannus removal through insurance can be combined with a formal body lift if approved. It is important to remember that all body lifts remove the pannus, but not all pannus removals are body lifts. Body lifts are defined as a pannus removal, tummy tuck, liposuction, and two flank resections. All patient groups can expect the lower abdominal fold to be improved and reduced following surgery. Many patients undergoing body lifts will need significant skin or tissue removed all around the waist. Body lifts or extended tummy tucks long procedures that are not covered by insurance currently. Patients are encouraged to look at photos of body lifts or other body contouring online or in our office before scheduling surgery. Dr. Lowe will discuss these issues during the course of the consultation and consent process.

### **What is the difference between a tummy tuck and body lift?**

There are a number of different types of body lifts. Most surgeons define a tummy tuck as a procedure involving skin removal and tightening of the abdomen only. In our practice body contouring procedures are priced based on time and complexity. Patients

requiring less work and time in the operating room are rewarded by a smaller fee. Some body lifts are more extensive requiring more undermining, skin removal, muscle reconstruction, and liposuction. Patients that have a lot of flank and buttock redundancy are good candidates for body lifts or extended tummy tucks. The natural break in the skin and scar location is usually best determined in consultation with a board certified plastic surgeon. The patient's age and health will also determine the best operation. Most patients considering body lifts require a circumferential incision, dissection, midline tightening, liposuction, and belly button repositioning.

### **What is the best technique for a body lift?**

Patients should take time to decide what areas of the abdomen and flank are of concern. Patients may want a smooth flat abdomen and flank, and others only want small improvements. The best approach can be determined in consultation with a Plastic Surgeon. It is usually best for patients to have as much skin and fat removed as possible to ensure a lasting result. The longer the surgical incision the more skin and soft tissue may be removed. Some patients prefer shorter incisions that do not extend around the flank and back. Standard tummy tucks cannot improve the lateral thigh, flank, and buttock without extending the incision. The best option depends on the patient's anatomy, preference, and willingness to compromise. Some patients combine body lifts with other minor procedures such as breast augmentation, breast lift, or liposuctions of the thighs. A frank discussion with a plastic surgeon help patients choose the best option.

### **Where are the incision placed?**

Standard body lifts usually do not cross the midline of the back in most cases. Current trends and changes in surgical techniques have resulted in changes in the way surgeons deal with the redundancy in the flank, lower back, and buttock. Plastic surgeons have increasingly placed surgical incisions lower along the pelvic rim as hip-huggers and across the back above the gluteal crease. This allows the lateral thigh and buttock to be lifted and in some cases enhanced. The exact placement of the surgical incision depends on the clinical presentation. Patients who have had major weight changes, multiple children, large fat deposits, or over 40 years of age usually require an extension across the lower back. In the front patients also require a small incision around the belly button. The belly button is reset just like a standard tummy tuck to allow for removal of skin in the upper abdomen and back. Patients should discuss these issues during consultation with a board certified plastic surgeon.

### **Does a body lift last forever?**

No body lift or body contouring procedure lasts forever. Patients are encouraged to lose weight before surgery and avoid weight gain after surgery. Losing weight before surgery allows for the removal of more skin and aggressive tightening of abdominal muscles. Patients who lose a substantial amount of weight after body lifts require revision in the future. Patients who are planning to get pregnant should wait at least 6 months after last childbirth. It is very important for patients to have a body lifts when their weight is stable and no babies are planned.

### **How long is the incision and how bad is the scar?**

One of the biggest concerns for patients considering body lifts is the scars. Elective body lifts are marked before surgery to ensure the patient understands scar position and length.

Patients should take some time to look at photographs of patients who have undergone a body lift. Scars are often crooked, raised, red, irregular, and displaced over time. Most patients undergoing body lifts are not concerned about the scars. These patients are focused on the extreme excess of skin and fat around the abdomen and flank. Patients with these deformities usually fully understand the tradeoff. Scars typically look the worse at 2 months and then improve at 8-12 months. Dr. Lowe will review scar treatments recommendations once the surgical incision is fully healed.

### **Does future revision cost a lot?**

The cost for body lift revision is limited for patients who experience complications within the first several months when returning to the original surgeon. However, a revision body lift is usually cheaper than a primary surgery. Revision body lifts may be the best option after significant skin stretch, weight fluctuation, or aging. In most cases, small scar revisions or laser treatments can be performed in the surgeon's office. In some cases, revision surgery is necessary to address more complex issues. Patients should talk to their board certified plastic surgeon about the risks and potential complications of elective body lifts prior to surgery.

### **Where and when should I have surgery?**

One of the most important decisions for patients considering body lifts is where and when. Body lifts can be performed at a hospital with overnight stay or surgical facility with home care. The benefit of a hospital setting is the overnight pain management and care. Patients in a surgical facility will be given a period of recovery and then go home the same day. In general, small staged body lifts are better in outpatient setting, and bigger body lifts are better in inpatient setting. Most patients undergoing body lifts have surgery at a hospital and stay overnight. The operation is lengthy and complicated making inpatient surgery the best option for almost everyone. Most patients require significant assistance at home for several days, feel better at one month, and recovery fully by three months. Each patient's pain control and recovery is different and cannot always be determined in advance. Although Dr. Lowe will make recommendations, each patient should make their own decision of when and where they should have surgery.

### **What are the restrictions after surgery?**

It is also important to be aware of the recovery associated with body lifts. Patients undergoing body lifts are asked to limit activity for 8-10 weeks. Patients will need to wear a support garment or abdominal binder for 2 weeks day and night and for two weeks at night thereafter. All patients require surgical drains to help decrease fluid collection and control swelling. Most drains stay in place for at least 3 weeks, but bigger surgery may require drains for several months. Sutures usually stay in place for 2-3 weeks and staples are sometimes required to provide addition support. Some patients who are unable to urinate after surgery will require a temporary placement of a bladder or Foley catheter. Patients report swelling, numbness, significant scarring, and minor pain for up to 12 months after body lifts.

### **What about patient safety?**

There are a variety of safety concerns related to body lifts. Many of the concerns are related to post-operative wound healing, bleeding, and pain control and have been reviewed. However, in most cases the safety of body lifts with liposuction is most dependent on the surgeon and surgical facility. Body lifts are a major elective operation reserved in most cases for patients in good health in an inpatient setting. Dr. Lowe is a

real plastic surgeon, who performs real surgery, in a real surgical center or hospital. As a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) he is required to follow guidelines designed to ensure the best patient safety and outcomes. Dr. Lowe proudly performs cosmetic surgery in accredited hospitals and surgical facilities. Most minor cosmetic surgery is performed at his certified in-office operating suite, Associates Surgery Center of Oklahoma (ASCO). ASCO is fully certified by the American Association for the Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF). It is not intended for overnight stays or longer operations. For further information about safety and credentials go to: [www.AAAASF.org](http://www.AAAASF.org) or [www.drjlowe.com](http://www.drjlowe.com)

### **Should I wait and think about my options?**

Body lifts are an important lifelong decision. The surgical procedure carries significant risks and benefits. Patients require a period of recovery and long term scar treatment. Patient should choose a board certified plastic surgeon that they trust, takes time, reviews risks, and puts safety first. One of the most important aspects of the surgery is patient care and follow-up. Some patients will require an extended hospital stay or other significant clinical interventions such as blood transfusions. Although the surgeon cannot pay for all unexpected cost it is usually best to stick with the surgeon you choose to ensure the best outcome at the best price. When possible, patients should talk about their plans with physicians, family members, and significant others. Patients should have realistic expectations regarding the surgery, recovery, long term care, and results. A body lift with liposuction is often the right thing for the right person

### **What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?**

1. Review your plastic surgeon's results (look at pre and post-op photos)
2. Take your time & ask questions (body lifts are big and long operations)
3. Full recovery is usually 2-3 months
4. Understand risks (bleeding, delayed healing, scarring)
5. Place the incision as low as possible to avoid a visible scar
6. Remove as much tissue as possible (limited scar, limited results)
7. Decide where to have the surgery (hospital is always the best choice)
8. Body lift should not be combined with other major procedures
9. Surgeon and facility certification and safety matters
10. Pick and stick with your surgeon when possible