

Mommy Makeovers

Address New Moms' Special Concerns

By Richard Buckley, M.D.

Medical Director, Advanced Dermatology Skin and Laser Surgery Center, Milford, Penn.

With the birth of their babies, mothers experience great joy. The nine months the body takes to prepare the newborn for life outside the womb comes to an end. But, often, the physical signs of pregnancy remain, leaving mommy drooping, sagging, and with fat pockets she might have never had before.



Most commonly, women's breasts change shape with breastfeeding; their stomachs don't rebound fully from the stretching of pregnancy; and stubborn fat bulges remain in places they don't belong.

Diet and exercise only go so far. Today's cosmetic surgery procedures can provide the final touches for restoring a pre-pregnancy body. To accommodate mommy's busy schedule, procedures can be done on an outpatient basis while mommies are wide awake and with relatively little downtime.

Mommy makeovers can be one or a combination of these three procedures:

Breast augmentation:

Especially after nursing, breasts often lose some of their fullness and might not be as high or perky as before pregnancy. Breast augmentation with breast implants or fat transfer can help restore the breast fullness and height. Some women, however, might prefer a breast lift only, or even a reduction, after pregnancy.

Liposuction:

The body prepares for pregnancy, in part, with added fat stores. The problem is that those pesky pockets of fat around the upper and lower abdomen, love handles, hips, outer thighs, inner thighs, and inner knees are tough to shed. Liposuction targets those areas, removing the fat permanently.

Tummy tuck:

Pregnancy leaves some women with excess skin and a Jell-O appearance. Tummy tucks are surgical procedures which trim the unwanted skin and flatten the abdomen.

While-awake procedures

Many years ago, breast augmentation, tummy tuck, and liposuction were only done in hospitals, using general anesthesia. Recovery from each of the procedures would take weeks or longer.

With modern advances, especially tumescent anesthesia used in liposuction, breast augmentation, and tummy tucks, we no longer need to have patients in the hospital. Rather, it's safe to perform these surgeries in outpatient centers.

The days of only general anesthesia—they're gone for many procedures, too. In fact, mommies and other patients can now be wide awake and

comfortable, thanks to local anesthetic. I prefer having patients awake during their procedures, versus having them under a general anesthetic and unable to respond. Not only are moms awake, but we able listen to music together and talk. It's very different than surgery of the past.

As a result of these modern-day options, mommies can return to caring for their babies faster. Some go back to daily activities within days after breast augmentation or liposuction. Tummy tuck procedures might require a little more time.

Addressing one concern at a time is generally best

For mommies who want to address all three areas (breasts, belly and excess fat), I usually recommend doing the procedures on three different days. This is for a few reasons. First of all, it's safer. Second, it's more comfortable for the patient.

The bottom line is this: We can better meet the specific cosmetic needs of mommies with targeted procedures that require no general anesthesia and less recovery time than in years' prior. I encourage women bothered by any of these post-pregnancy concerns to get more than one opinion, from different physicians who are experienced in cosmetic surgery. And be sure to ask about procedures under while-awake anesthesia.