

# Ask Dr. Katzen



*OH Magazine is pleased to present a series of articles featuring reader questions answered by expert plastic surgeon J. Timothy Katzen, MD, FACS. The questions in this issue focus on reshaping the abdominal area. Watch for questions related to insurance, procedure timing and a variety of post-bariatric procedures in upcoming issues.*

## Dear Dr. Katzen,

*During a discussion with a fellow WLS patient I was told that after a tummy tuck or liposuction it would be hard to regain weight in those area. I was told that any weight gain after would deposit somewhere else on the body. How much truth is there to this statement?*

*Teresa*

## Dear Teresa,

Liposuction and tummy tucks permanently remove skin and fat from that area. Liposuction does not just suck the fat from the fat cell; liposuction removes the entire fat cell. A tummy tuck removes skin and fat directly.

Your question pertains to the distribution of new fat. As we age, new fat cells can begin to accumulate. The body does not see an empty void around the tummy after a tummy tuck or the area that had liposuction. Instead, the body distributes new fat evenly throughout the body. New fat will be delivered to areas where it has been previously “programmed” to go, not where there is an absence of fat. Liposuction and tummy tucks do not prevent future fat accumulation in those areas. Liposuction and tummy tucks just turn the clock back 10 to 15 years in those areas.

## Dear Dr. Katzen,

*How long does the actual tummy tuck procedure take? I fear it may take as long as six to eight hours for a huge apron, but I don't want to be under anesthesia that long. I know it depends on the size of the apron. I know the rule of thumb is to keep the weight off two years before you proceed with a tummy tuck. However, I am 61 years old, have had numerous rashes under the flap, can hardly tolerate the odor and my back is killing me. Should I really wait the two years?*

*La Wanda*

## Dear La Wanda,

The average tummy tuck takes between three to five hours, depending on size. I perform all my tummy tucks under general anesthesia with a board certified anesthesiologist. Because of your age, I would perform your surgery in a hospital with an overnight stay. Usually, this is what insurance covers. Rashes, odor, and back pain are typical conditions that I see after weight loss. Some insurance policies allow for a panniculectomy in patients with these types of conditions. Typically, I perform the tummy tuck 10-12 months after gastric bypass and once the patient's weight has stabilized.

## Dear Dr. Katzen,

I am male and I just had a tummy tuck after losing over 200 pounds. I am 43 pounds from goal. First, my plastic surgeon informed me he would not be able to give me a belly button, and so I have no belly button after my tummy tuck. He gave no reason and I never asked, but why would he opt not to? Secondly, I am curious about getting thigh-plasty. Does thighplasty include liposuction?

*Mickey*

## Dear Mickey,

I believe that belly buttons are extremely important. For the human eye, the belly button is an essential visual clue for assessing the overall aesthetic quality of the abdomen. Certainly, the abdomen looks abnormal without a belly button. I am not sure why your surgeon did not make your belly button. Your surgeon may have ignored your belly button to save approximately 20 minutes of operative time and to minimize potential complications around the belly button. I take great pride in the creation of a belly buttons, and indeed it is my favorite part of the tummy tuck. I have a significant number of patients who come to me for belly button reconstruction. In a majority of cases, belly button reconstruction is covered by insurance.

Your second question relates to thighplasty. My reconstructive plastic surgery practice is composed entirely of significant weight loss patients. I have developed a five-level grading scale to describe to insurance companies the types of thighs I examine.

- **Grade 1** patients have excellent skin tone and mild fat excess in the inner thigh from the groin to halfway down the inner thigh. *These patients respond well to liposuction.*

- **Grade 2** patients have poor skin tone, moderate medial thigh skin redundancy and moderate fat excess in the inner thigh from the groin to half way down the inner thigh. *These patients respond well to*

**Congratulations**, you got rid of the fat! Now, get rid of the extra skin by letting Dr. Katzen help you to complete your weight loss journey. 100 percent of Dr. Katzen's practice is devoted to reconstructive plastic surgery after weight loss. Dr. Katzen has a multi-disciplinary team to address the many issues concerning weight loss. Depending on your insurance carrier, Dr. Katzen's office has an 80 percent rate of insurance approval. Please visit [www.BodyByKatzen.com](http://www.BodyByKatzen.com) and call 1-888-KATZEN-0 for a consultation.

*liposuction and a crescent thigh lift. This crescent-shaped incision (like a piece of cantaloupe) removes skin and fat from the inner thigh. The scar follows the inside seam of one's underwear. The incision is ideal because it is hidden beneath even the most revealing underwear.*

- **Grade 3** patients have poor skin tone, significant medial thigh skin redundancy, and moderate fat excess from the inner thigh to the inner knee. *These patients respond well to excision of skin and fat from the groin to the knee. The resulting scar is from the groin to the knee.*

- **Grade 4** patients have poor skin tone, severe medial thigh skin redundancy, and severe fat excess in the inner thigh from the groin to the knee. *These patients have to be staged. As I have explained to many insurance companies, optimal results are achieved by liposuction followed 2 to 3 months later with direct excision. Depending on the severity, Grade 4 patients may require 2 to 5 rounds of liposuction. The resulting scar is from the groin to the knee.*

- **Grade 5** patients have poor skin tone, severe medial thigh skin redundancy, and severe fat excess in the inner thigh from the groin to the ankle. *These patients respond well to several sessions of liposuction over 6 to 8 months. Then, 2 months after the last liposuction session, skin and fat is excised from the groin to the ankles. The scar is from the inner groin to the ankles.*

**This grading system may help you determine roughly what you will experience during thighplasty.**



Thanks to all of you who have emailed me for information and insight. I look forward to answering your questions in the next issue of *OH Magazine*.  
Sincerely,  
Dr. Katzen

**Editor's Note:** We want to hear from you! Do you have a question about plastic surgery for Dr. Katzen? Send your email to: [AskDrKatzen@obesityhelp.com](mailto:AskDrKatzen@obesityhelp.com)