

ASK DR BARBER

About Plastic Surgery

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I am interested in having a **tummy tuck**. I am a **mother of four young children** and have to coordinate someone to help me when I recuperate. How much **down time** will I have?

ANSWER

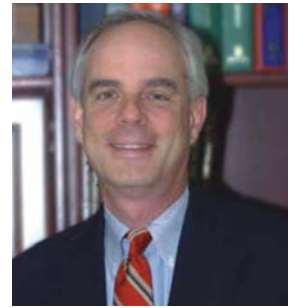
One of the most common questions I get in my practice is whether I can return a woman's tummy to the way it was before she had children. As any woman knows who has had one or more children, there are many changes that take place with pregnancy, including what happens to your tummy. These changes include development of a lower abdominal pouch, laxity of skin, stretching of the abdominal muscles, and stretch marks. These changes don't happen to all women, and often there is some family tendency to these things happening. Although a tummy tuck will never return your abdomen to exactly the way it was before child birth, the procedure can make a very significant improvement in most of the above listed problems. A tummy tuck, known as an abdominoplasty, is a surgical procedure that is typically done under general anesthesia; that is you are completely asleep. The procedure will usually take about three hours to perform, and can often be done as an outpatient. The goal in a tummy tuck is to tighten the abdominal muscles, remove the excess skin and fat in the lower portion of the abdomen, and in doing so remove most of the stretch marks, at least the ones that are below the belly button. Recovery from this surgery takes about two to three weeks before you can return to driving and work. Lifting (and this includes children) should be limited for the first month or so after the surgery. You will need someone to help you for the first week or ten days following this surgery, especially with the child care responsibilities.

Q

I am **42 years old** and **underwent a breast augmentation** when I was **thirty**. My breasts have **become firmer** over the last few years and **are not the same shape** as they were when I first had the surgery. Is this **anything that I should do**?

ANSWER

I am not sure whether you have silicone or saline (salt water) implants, but if they were placed 12 years ago, they were more likely than not saline implants. Since you did not mention that they were getting smaller, I can assume that they are not leaking. However, what you describe sounds like you have developed a capsular contracture which is the medical term for firmness that occurs around an implant. When this occurs, it can also affect the shape of the implant. You should see a board certified plastic surgeon to evaluate your implants. If the degree of firmness is significant, then a surgical procedure might be necessary to correct the problem. You should certainly have a mammogram to evaluate not only your breast but also the condition of the implant. One thing you probably already know, but I will say it again, no implants will last forever and eventually all will need to be removed and replaced. Usually I recommend waiting until the saline implants begin to leak (since saline is a very benign liquid that the body tolerates without any problem). However, with silicone gel implants, I recommend that you monitor the integrity of the implant with a periodic MRI. This of course is expensive and therefore another option would be to undergo a planned exchange of the silicone implants every 10 to 15 years. This is not a recommendation by anyone such as the FDA or our plastic surgery society; it is simply a consideration that I discuss with all patients who have silicone gel implants and is based on my experience with removing many broken and intact implants, and knowing that it is a much simpler surgery to change implants before they have an opportunity to leak. This opinion may change in the future as new data becomes available regarding longevity of the newer technology silicone gel implants. Regardless, the best advice I can give you is to follow-up with your plastic surgeon and let him/her examine you and make appropriate recommendations.



Dr. W. Byron Barber
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About Dr. Barber

William Byron Barber II is regarded as one of the most prominent plastic surgeons in his field and has recently been selected one of America's Top Surgeons. He has been practicing plastic surgery in Greensboro for 15 years and is board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. He is presently Chief of Plastic Surgery at Moses Cone Hospital System and is an active member of numerous local, regional and national plastic surgery organizations.

Dr. Barber hosts free monthly seminars in his office. To make a reservation, please call Barber Center for Plastic Surgery at 336.275.3430. The office is located at 1591 Yanceyville Street, Suite 100 in Greensboro. Their website is www.barberplasticsurgery.com To ask Dr. Barber a question for this column, please email him at drbarber@barberplasticsurgery.com

Dr. Barber has been featured in *New Beauty Magazine* and was selected as one of America's Top Plastic Surgeons of 2006.

