WATERFRONT
PRIVATE HOSPITAL

PATIENT INFORMATION · AFTERCARE

Mini Tummy Tuck Aftercare

Recovery guidance for mini tummy tuck (mini abdominoplasty) surgery. This page provides comprehensive aftercare instructions based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written aftercare information. Recovery is faster than full tummy tuck, with most patients returning to normal activities within 1–2 weeks.

Typical recovery: 2–4 weeks for most activities, 3 months for full recovery · Reviewed 4 July 2026 · Version 1.0

When to get help — your traffic light guide

RED

Call 999 or go to A&E now if you have:

These can be life-threatening. Do not wait to call the hospital first.

- Sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- Leg swelling with breathing problems (possible blood clot)
- Heavy bleeding that won't stop
- High temperature (over 38°C) with confusion or unusual drowsiness

AMBER

Contact us now — do not wait — if you have:

- Temperature over 38°C with severe pain
- One side of tummy suddenly much more swollen
- Severe pain not helped by medication

Office hours (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm): 0131 376 3785

Evenings and weekends during your early recovery: Out-of-Hours Nurse Advice Line 07405322689 — our nurse can advise you, contact your surgeon, or direct you to NHS services.

After your early recovery period: call the hospital in office hours, or NHS 24 on 111.

Had your surgery at Spire Shawfair Park (overnight stay)? Contact Spire directly using the number on your discharge paperwork — not the Waterfront advice line.

GREEN

Tell us at your next appointment:

Anything else that is niggling or worrying you — no concern is too small. Mention it at your next appointment, or call us during office hours.

Related Information Leaflets

Separate leaflets about the procedure itself — not the aftercare instructions above. Tap a title to download, or find them all on your procedure page in the portal.

- Abdominoplasty — Patient Leaflet (https://waterfront-patient-portal.netlify.app/waterfrontaftercare/abdominoplasty_patient_leaflet.pdf)

How to Use This Information

The advice below is based on Waterfront Private Hospital's written mini tummy tuck aftercare information. It is general guidance for the average patient and may be adapted by your consultant for your individual circumstances.

Always follow the specific instructions given to you on the day of your surgery and in your printed leaflet. If there is ever a difference between this guide and your consultant's instructions, follow your consultant's written or verbal instructions and contact us for clarification.

Post-Operative Checklist

- Make sure you have your painkillers — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you
- Compression stockings fitted
- Follow-up nurse appointment booked (end of week 1)
- Transport home arranged
- Responsible adult with you for the first night
- Emergency contact numbers saved to phone
- Understand wound care instructions
- Belly button care explained (if repositioned)

Wound Care

- Keep dressings clean and dry initially

- Shower carefully - OK if outer dressings get wet
- After outer dressings removed at week 1, keep wounds clean
- Keep belly button clean daily with cotton bud if repositioned
- Apply micropore tape to scars from week 5 onwards
- Use recommended moisturisers (E45, Aveeno, Bio-Oil) when wounds healed
- Watch for signs of infection: redness, swelling, discharge, fever

Pain Management

- Take your painkillers as directed on their labels — every medicine you go home with is labelled with its dose and frequency, and your nurse will go through them with you before you leave. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together
- Take prescribed pain medication as directed - don't wait for pain
- Use cold packs for first 48 hours (over compression stockings)
- Pain improves significantly after first week
- Take lactulose to prevent constipation

Activity Restrictions

- No heavy lifting (over 10kg) for 6 weeks
- No driving for first 1–2 weeks (until off pain medication)
- Light walking encouraged from day 1
- Return to work: usually 1–2 weeks for desk jobs
- No sit-ups or abdominal exercises for 3 months
- Swimming: once wounds are fully healed — usually around 6 weeks
- Avoid smoking and vaping nicotine for at least 4 weeks — smoking significantly impairs wound healing and increases infection risk
- Avoid alcohol for 3 weeks

Understanding Your Mini Tummy Tuck

During your procedure, we performed:

- Excess skin below belly button removed
- Lower tummy muscles tightened (if needed)
- Small amount of liposuction (if needed)

- Single scar from hip to hip (lower than full tummy tuck)
- Belly button usually not moved

Recovery Differences from Full Tummy Tuck

- Faster recovery (1–2 weeks vs 2–3 weeks for work)
- Less bent posture (nearly upright by week 2)
- Can stand straighter sooner
- Usually back to work 1–2 weeks
- Less extensive numbness
- Generally less pain

Before You Leave the Hospital

- **Medications**
- **Painkillers:** Make sure you have your painkillers before you leave — the nurse looking after you will go through them with you.
- **Compression Stockings**
- Fitted before discharge. These are essential for preventing blood clots and should be worn day and night until you are fully mobile — for most people around 3 weeks.
- **Follow-Up Appointments**
- You will be given a card with details of your first nurse appointment (usually end of week 1) and contact details if you have concerns once you get home.
- **Getting Home Safely**
- You must have someone to take you home and a **responsible adult with you for the first night**.
- **Wound Care Instructions**
- You will receive detailed wound care instructions. Keep these with you for reference during your recovery.
- **Belly Button Care (if repositioned)**
- If your belly button was repositioned, we will explain daily care procedures to prevent infection.

Your Painkillers

Every medicine you go home with is clearly labelled with its dose and how often to take it, and your nurse will go through your painkillers with you before you leave.

Take them as directed on the label. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can safely be taken together. If your pain isn't controlled despite taking your painkillers as directed, contact us.

Compression Stockings & Garments

- **Compression Stockings (REQUIRED)**
- **Duration:** Until you are fully mobile (for most people around 3 weeks)
- **Wear:** Day and night
- **Purpose:** Reduces blood clot risk
- **Care:** Remove briefly for washing only
- **Compression Garments (OPTIONAL)**
- Not required for mini tummy tuck and no proven benefit. Not recommended during early healing due to potential DVT risk if too tight.
- If you prefer to wear a compression garment:
- Must be comfortable (firm but not tight or painful)
- Should feel gentle support, not restriction
- Stop if causing any discomfort
- Available options from: Lipoelastic VH Variant, VH Special Comfort, or Macom Side Fastening Girdle. Use code QUABA for discount.

Scar Care

- **Your Scar**
- Single horizontal scar from hip to hip
- Lower position than full tummy tuck scar
- Usually hidden by underwear
- **When to Start (Week 5)**
- Only start scar care when wounds are completely healed. If there is any scabbing or open areas, wait longer.
- **Scar Care Routine**
- **Step 1: Apply Micropore Tape**
- Use 3M micropore tape from pharmacy
- Leave on 3–5 days
- Can shower with it on
- **Step 2: Remove and Moisturise**
- Use plain moisturiser (E45, Aveeno, Bio-Oil)

- Leave exposed 1–2 days
- **Step 3: Repeat Cycle**
- Continue for 4+ months. Stop tape if irritation occurs.
- **Scar Timeline**
- **3 months:** Scars still pink/red
- **6 months:** Significant fading
- **12 months:** Final appearance

Belly Button Care

If your belly button was repositioned during surgery, it needs special care throughout your recovery.

- **Daily Routine**
- Clean with cotton bud
- Use warm soapy water
- Remove any crusting gently
- Pat dry thoroughly
- Check for signs of infection
- **Watch For**
- Redness spreading
- Smelly discharge
- Increasing pain

Activity Resume Timeline

- **Showering** — Day 1 — Pat wounds dry carefully
- **Driving** — Weeks 1–2 — When comfortable with emergency stop
- **Office work** — Weeks 1–2 — When can sit comfortably
- **Physical work** — Weeks 2–3 — No heavy lifting over 10kg
- **Walking exercise** — Week 2 — Build very gradually
- **Light exercise** — Week 4 — Start gently
- **Full exercise** — Week 6 — With surgeon approval
- **Swimming** — Once wounds are fully healed — usually around 6 weeks
- **Heavy lifting (over 10kg)** — Week 6 — Resume gradually
- **Sit-ups/abs** — 3 months — Start gently
- **Flying (short)** — 2 weeks — Under 3 hours

- **Flying (long-haul)** — About 4 weeks — UK guidance after surgery; keep hydrated, move regularly, wear flight socks. Flying sooner? Discuss it with us first

Lifestyle Guidelines

- ✓ **DO**
- Walk regularly from day 1
- Wear compression stockings until you are fully mobile (usually about 3 weeks)
- Many patients find sleeping propped up on pillows most comfortable at first
- Keep wounds clean and dry
- Eat high-fibre foods
- Take laxatives if needed
- Stand as straight as comfortable
- Be patient with swelling
- ✗ **AVOID**
- Smoking or vaping nicotine for at least 4 weeks
- Alcohol for 3 weeks
- Heavy lifting for 6 weeks
- Straining on toilet
- Bath for 2 weeks
- Sit-ups for 3 months
- Swimming for 3 months

Your Recovery, Stage by Stage

Days 1–3 — Early Recovery

Managing pain and tightness, early mobilization

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Moderate pain and tightness (less than full tummy tuck)
- Slightly bent when walking
- Swelling in lower tummy area
- Bruising
- Blood spots on dressings
- Mood changes

CARE ROUTINE

- Take painkillers regularly (don't wait for pain)
- Wear compression stockings day and night
- Walk around home every 2–3 hours
- Sleep propped up on pillows if comfortable
- Shower carefully (OK if outer dressings get wet)
- Stand and move while slightly bent

COMFORT

- Take painkillers on schedule
- Report uncontrolled pain immediately

Days 4–7 — Gradual Improvement

Pain decreasing, standing straighter, more energy

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Pain decreasing
- Standing slightly straighter
- More energy
- Swelling stable or reducing

CARE ROUTINE

- Continue compression stockings day and night
- Increase walking gradually
- Light household activities OK
- Keep belly button clean if exposed
- Attend first nurse appointment (end of week 1)

COMFORT

- Pain should be improving
- Continue pain relief as needed
- Walking helps reduce pain

Week 1 (End) — Nurse Appointment

First post-op check, dressings removed

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Outer dressings removed
- Wounds checked
- Ready for next recovery phase

CARE ROUTINE

- Attend nurse appointment
- Paper tape/glue tape left on
- Belly button stitches removed if any
- Ask questions about care

COMFORT

- Pain manageable with regular relief

Week 2 — Much Better

Less bent posture, can stand straighter, return to work possible

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Walking more upright
- Most stop strong painkillers
- Bruising fading
- Can return to desk work
- May start driving

CARE ROUTINE

- Remove paper tape by end of week 2 (apply Vaseline if stuck)
- Glue tape stays 3 weeks
- Continue compression stockings
- Increase light activities
- Can return to desk work
- May drive if comfortable and off strong painkillers

COMFORT

- Pain significantly reduced
- May stop strong painkillers
- Continue regular relief as needed

Weeks 3–4 — Nearly Normal

Walking fully upright, can moisturise scars

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Walking fully upright
- Swelling reducing significantly
- Feeling more normal
- Can moisturise scars if dry

CARE ROUTINE

- Start scar care (if wounds completely healed)
- Continue compression stockings until you are fully mobile (for most people around 3 weeks)
- Increase normal activities
- Can moisturise scars with E45, Aveeno, or Bio-Oil
- Stand as straight as comfortable

COMFORT

- Minimal pain expected
- Full range of movement

Weeks 4–6 — Mostly Recovered

Resume light activities and exercise

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Most swelling gone
- Feeling much more normal
- Can do most activities
- Light exercise permitted

CARE ROUTINE

- Resume normal activities gradually
- Light exercise with approval
- Continue scar care
- Follow-up appointment around week 6
- Can swim after week 6 (chlorine irritates scars in early healing)

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full comfort with activities

Week 6+ — Resume Exercise

Gradually increase exercise and activities

WHAT'S NORMAL

- Fully recovered
- Scars fading
- Normal activities resumed
- Exercise permitted gradually

CARE ROUTINE

- Resume exercise gradually with approval
- Continue scar care for several more months
- Normal sports and activities
- Long flights OK (wear compression stockings)

COMFORT

- No pain expected
- Full recovery achieved

Follow-Up Appointments

Week 1 (End) — First post-operative nurse appointment to check healing and wound progress.

- Outer dressings removed
- Wounds checked
- Paper tape/glue tape left on
- Belly button stitches removed (if any)
- Questions answered

Further nurse reviews — as needed — Some patients need further nurse reviews. If so, the nurses will arrange these with you and will discharge you from nurse-led care once they are happy your wounds have healed.

Around 6 months — surgeon review (final follow-up) — Your surgeon will usually see you at around 6 months to assess your final result. Your surgeon is always available to review you sooner if required, and in some circumstances may wish to see you before your final follow-up.

Your appointment schedule may vary. Always follow the specific dates and times given in your appointment card. Contact us if you need to reschedule.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does my tummy look worse before it looks better?

Bruising and swelling peak around days 3–5, especially if liposuction was performed. This is completely normal and will improve significantly over the following weeks. The morning appearance shows your true progress most accurately.

When will I walk normally?

You'll be nearly upright by week 2 and walking fully normally by week 3. The mini tummy tuck requires less extensive healing than full tummy tuck, so recovery of normal posture is faster.

Why am I still so swollen?

Swelling is worst in the evening and improves in the morning. Most swelling resolves within 3–6 months, with the most significant improvement by 3 months. This is completely normal and doesn't mean something is wrong.

Can I wear normal clothes?

Wear loose clothing for the first 2 weeks. You can transition to normal clothes by week 3 as swelling reduces.

Is the numbness normal?

Yes, the lower tummy typically remains numb for several months, but sensation gradually returns over time. Some patients experience temporary 'pins and needles' as nerves reconnect. Numbness is usually much less extensive than after full tummy tuck.

When can I exercise my abdominal muscles?

Gentle core exercises can start around week 6 with approval. Full abdominal exercises should wait until 3 months.

Can I have lymphatic massage?

Yes, we have no objections to lymphatic massage if you wish to arrange it yourself. Wait until after your first nurse appointment (week 1) and ensure your therapist is qualified and experienced with post-surgical massage. Many patients find it helpful for reducing swelling.

What's the difference between mini tummy tuck and full tummy tuck recovery?

Mini tummy tuck has significantly faster recovery: less pain, can stand straighter sooner (week 2 vs week 4), back to work within 1–2 weeks vs 2–3 weeks, and less extensive numbness. Both require avoiding heavy lifting for 6 weeks.