

Adam G. Tattelbaum, M.D.

Cosmetic Plastic Surgery

Postpartum Restoration



As the proud father of two beautiful children, I have had the first hand opportunity to see how such a magnificent miracle can dramatically alter the female form. Genetic, unpredictable, and often unfair, pregnancy is a body-altering experience.

When I was approached about a placement in Ladies' Home Journal, my wife encouraged me to write this article about postpartum restoration. What I do for living is not about creating the extreme or making excessive change. The greatest joy in my practice of cosmetic plastic surgery is simply making people feel whole again. I attempt to restore a

sense of normalcy when other measures, such as diet and exercise have failed.

The body is incredibly smart and has the ability to change dramatically in response to the hormones associated with pregnancy. The breasts become full, and skin stretches remarkably. The same thing occurs in the abdomen, not only to the skin but also to the underlying abdominal wall and even the pelvis. Physiologic weight gain occurs as part of a normal pregnancy. Moreover, spider veins become common as blood volume increases.

Unfortunately, the body does not do as good a job restoring itself. Skin loses elasticity. Breasts often lose even more volume than they started with before pregnancy. The combination of loose skin and diminished volume can leave the breasts deflated and saggy. The abdominal wall can remain loose despite exercise, and weight can be unbearably difficult to lose. Spider veins persist.

As a board certified physician I always encourage my patients to be healthy and achieve a comfortable weight. This does not mean rail thin and certainly does not involve crash dieting-- it is simply a realistic weight that can be reasonably maintained when the physiologic weight gain of pregnancy is lost.

Unfortunately, sometimes doing the right things is not enough. That is where I come in. The first part of my involvement is a consultation and physical examination. Safety must always come first and surgical treatments can only proceed after a clean bill of health is ascertained.

From top to bottom, here are the most common things I offer my postpartum patients.

- For drooping or lack of volume, breast augmentation, breast lift or a combination of the two are the most popular choices. Because implants add volume and projection to the breast, a lift

is not always needed. The decision is based upon the patient's goals, the degree of laxity and the degree of volume loss. Implants come in all shapes and sizes and choosing the right implant for the right patient can restore a sense of balance.

- Abdominal enhancement comes in a variety of forms. From mini tummy tuck to full abdominoplasty a simple pinch test reveals how much skin can safely be tightened. This is not a one-size-fits-all operation. I tailor abdominoplasty to my patient's goals, the degree of laxity, and often the lines of their bathing suit or underwear, which I measure them in on the day of surgery.

- Liposuction in and of itself can contour problem areas that are diet resistant after postpartum weight loss. The key is to treat areas where the skin tone still has enough elasticity to shrink back aesthetically. The most common places are the hips and inner and outer thighs.

- While deeper and larger veins are often best treated by ligation or stripping, spider veins can be easily eradicated with laser treatment.

While this is certainly not a complete list of the procedures that I perform in the postpartum patient, these measures are in many ways the most gratifying. These are the options that many people initially explore with trepidation and ultimately regret not pursuing sooner.

If you see patient of mine walking down the street who happens to be a friend of yours and she looks better to you, healthier, happier, perhaps more self-confident, but you're not quite sure why-- it would make me very happy.

Dr. Adam Tattelbaum is a founder and senior partner of the Washington Plastic Surgery Group. He is a board certified plastic surgeon specializing in cosmetic plastic surgery. He is also an owner of the Papillon Medical Spa in Rockville, Maryland, which is dedicated to nonsurgical cosmetic enhancements. He has offices in Rockville and Annapolis, Maryland and McLean, Virginia. He lives with his wife and two children outside of Washington, D.C.

For a complimentary consultation please call:

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