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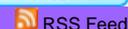
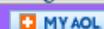
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Saturday, February 23, 2008

## The down and dirty on sagging skin and how to avoid it!



I have been asked so many times about the issue of sagging skin and weight loss that I've decided to dedicate this blog to that issue.

So you've worked and you've worked to lose weight and now you have another worry – sagging skin – is it going to happen to you? And, if it does happen, what can you do about it? First of all don't panic! There are some things you can do to prevent it. So let's start!

### Sexy Sleeveless Arms

The back of the upper arm is a spot where women typically store fat. Without a healthy diet and exercise, the fat storage, combined with flabby triceps muscles, can leave you with the giggly appearance we all hate. So how do we avoid it – upper-arm work provides quick gratification.

Dumbbell basics: To shape up stubborn body parts you need to use weights that are heavy enough to fatigue your muscles. Studies show that the majority of people choose weights that are too light to do the job. If you are a beginner, start with a lighter pair (3 – 5 pounds) and do 3 sets of 15 repetitions.

1. Overhead shoulder press.
2. Lateral raise.
3. Overhead triceps press.
4. Reverse fly.
5. Biceps curl.
6. Chest fly.
7. Triceps dip on chair.
8. Lateral raise.
9. Double-arm row.

### Lean, toned thighs

In a recent report, a large proportion of women noted that their bottom halves are usually where fat goes to stay. Nature pads excess fat around women's thighs to ensure they have some fuel reserves to ensure a strong pregnancy and feed hungry babies in times of famine.

However, when I talk about toned thighs, I mean really mean strong, fit legs! For each of the following exercises, do 2 sets of 15 repetitions.

1. Curtsy Lunge.
2. Bridge glute lift.
3. Prone hamstring curl.
4. All-fours glute lift.
5. Ballet leg sweep.
6. Plie calf raise (think of a graceful ballet dancer)
7. Crescent lunge.
8. Side-lying leg circle.

### The oh so dreaded biggy – belly fat

Scientists have known for some time now that excess body fat isn't good for you. Recent studies have shown that carrying excess body fat specifically around your belly is really, really unhealthy. Studies show that women who have a waistline measuring 35 inches or more are at a greater risk for heart disease and diabetes than those whose waistline measurements are smaller. For men (lets not leave them out), a waistline measurement of 40 or above can be an indicator of the same health risks.

If you are going to exercise I urge you to do both strength training and cardio workouts. The right mix of cardio and strength training is important for fast, lasting results. I do 60 minutes of cardio 3 days a week and 60 minutes of strength training 3 times a week (if you have less time do less – the important thing is to do both).

The flat belly workout basics consist of the following:

1. Cardio exercise to burn calories, boost cardiovascular fitness, and shed fat.
2. Strength training (with weights) to build muscle, to boost metabolism, and to strengthen bones.
3. Core-focused exercise to tone and tighten the mid-section.

Unless you are shedding fat, you can spend hours doing ab exercises without seeing a change. The following cardio exercises are my favorites: walking, swimming, cycling, jogging, or using cardio machines like stair climbers and elliptical trainers. Do what you can fit into your lifestyle – the main thing is to just do it and not think about doing it.

1. For cardio workouts I do a variety as I get bored easily. I always do steady paced walks – I increased the length each week. As you become fit, you should be able to walk at a faster pace (and burn fat faster). Periodic bursts of fast-paced walking interspersed with a moderate pace (interval training) are great for getting over those stubborn plateaus everyone always worries about. Studies show that interval training keeps metabolism revved up long after the workout is done which means you burn more calories throughout the day (I kinda like that one).

2. Lifting weights is the best way to build muscle and fuel metabolism (particularly important if have hypothyroidism like myself). Beginning in your early 30's, you start to lose ½ pound of muscle a year. If you don't take action, that loss can double by the time you hit menopause (scary heh?). With every pound of muscle lost, your body burns fewer calories, which explains why gaining weight gets easier and losing weight gets tougher as we get older. Decreasing muscle mass also makes us weaker, and everyday tasks become increasingly more difficult. Don't be afraid to use heavier weights – women simply don't have enough of the hormones needed to get big, bulky muscles unless you are really, really lifting heavy weights. If you can't do at least 8 reps, then the weight is too heavy. Because some muscles are bigger than others, you will need to use heavier weights for exercises that target your chest, back, legs, and butt.

- Take 3 – 5 minutes to warm up and prepare your body for activity.
- If you are just starting out – start with a 3 pound dumbbell set.
- If you are more experienced go for either the 5 pound or the 8 pound set.

I found the following exercises (done with dumbbells) to be pretty good for my stomach muscles:

- the lunge press
- the squat curl
- the side lunge and raise
- the push-up row

I also do the following core-focused exercises to tone and tighten my mid-section.

These are done without dumbbells:

- the bicycle
- the hover
- the roll-up
- arm and leg extensions
- the ab pike

And I do the following exercises with a stability ball:

- the reverse hip lift
- the roll-out
- the pike
- the skier

When the going gets tough, it can help if you change your thought process. Imagine you are contracting your muscles and you will be amazed at what you can accomplish. Imagine yourself strong, energized, and light as a feather – it helps – it really does.

I also made sure I did the following:

- I included a healthy oil (olive, peanut, sesame), some nuts or some seeds, some olives or some avocados into my diet every day.
- I didn't allow myself to go over 400 calories per meal (this will vary according to your height, starting weight etc.).
- I never went longer than 4 hours without eating.
- I always reminded myself not to under-eat – if you drastically cut down on the amount of food you eat for an extended period of time, your body's natural response is to slow things down in order to conserve fat.

Unfortunately for me, after having 4 children by C-section, and after having numerous stomach surgeries there was no way my stomach pouch was going to go away – the muscles were just too stretched out of shape (don't wait to be an old bag like me to realize that you need to take control of your fat).

So I choose to have a Tummy Tuck (abdominoplasty). It is one of the most popular cosmetic procedures performed. In the US alone 150,000 were performed in 2006. There are, however, a number of variables which determine whether someone is a candidate for this procedure and it should not be considered lightly. Medical and psychological fitness for surgery is a must. It is also ideal if you are a non-smoker who is close to your ideal weight. Anatomic features that may be improved with a tummy tuck include loose skin and lax abdominal muscles. For some people (me being one of them) loose tummy skin and stretched out, sagging tummy muscles can not be improved with diet and exercise alone. If skin elasticity is adequate (mine wasn't – hence a large proportion of stretch marks) liposuction may flatten the abdomen but it will not tighten the skin. Lax muscles are common after multiple pregnancies and respond well to tightening as part of a tummy tuck.

In addition to the superficial layers, fat is also distributed in the deep layers surrounding the internal organs. This fat may only be reduced through diet and exercise (as I have mentioned above).

Generally, a horizontal incision is placed just within, or above, the pubic area. The length of the incision, which extends laterally toward the pelvic bones, depends largely on the amount of skin to be removed. The contour of this incision will vary somewhat according to the structure of your abdomen and the style of bathing suit or

underwear that you prefer. Your plastic surgeon will try to keep the incision within your bathing suit lines, but this may not always be possible. I admit – I was vain and after working hard to lose the weight I wanted to be able to wear, if not a bikini, at least a cute 2-piece swimsuit! After I had the surgery done I was able to wear a bikini (not bad for an old bag but not something everyone wants to be able to do).

I was in the hospital a total of 2 days, although I have heard of people returning home the same day it is not something I would recommend. I was up walking the day after surgery and although I did have some swelling and discoloration this was not significant and went away after a few weeks.

The amount of recovery time before you can resume normal activities varies with each person but I was able to resume mild exercises after two weeks, and increased the amount as my surgeon allowed.

Note: The above picture is an example only - it is not a picture of me - I didn't want my pictures taken of the before and after of this procedure, and afterall, it was my choice.

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 Member Comments About This Blog Post:

**STEPHANIE\_JE/**  
3/11/2008 1:15AM



That looks like my stomach, too! Ha, ha. I loved the info. Thankx!

**MYKIDSMOM**  
3/10/2008 2:28AM



HEY JENNA!

Where'd you get a picture of my stomach?

Ha ha.

After three C-Sections, my stomach looks identical!

Thanks for the very informative blog. You are just full of it (great information, I mean!!)

Love your page.  
Stacy

**HOLLY2327**  
3/9/2008 1:33AM



Great information here! Thanks for sharing the knowledge!

**JTTW1013**  
3/4/2008 5:16AM



Wow, great info. I have been a little concerned about this as I have a large amount of weight to lose. I told myself when I make it to my goal weight if I have a lot of excess belly skin I am going to have a tummy tuck. But first I am going to try your below suggestions and hope for the best.

**SAYRAH-M**  
3/2/2008 9:41PM



Thanks for this very useful information!!

**NELSON071**  
3/2/2008 9:29PM



Jenna,

Thanks so much. I had a Spark friend pose a question regarding sagging skin on her back. I am going to direct her to this blog.....I wish I could email it some how. Well I am going to tell her to read your blog...o what a blessing.

**RCRCOWGIR**  
3/2/2008 4:18PM



Jenna, Thanks so much , you have taught me much about this subject. I don't know how tall you are but at 5'2" at 64 years old and 239 lbs ,I'm doing all the correct things now (It's about time). When I was younger I lost 108 lbs and did it the wrong way ,In eight months and eating only carrot sticks , completely wrong. I know I can do it again. My daughter is my partner in this . She is my reason for starting , and you are my roll model . If only you knew how inspirational you are to so many. What a good thing you have done for us all , Even this old gal that's very young at heart, Again thanks , Hugs, Carol ,

Comment edited on: 3/2/2008 4:24:21 PM

**GRAMMACA**  
3/1/2008 6:54AM



Well said! I am glad you pointed out that everyone's skin and muscle are different. Many factors can influence how quickly and effectively the tummy returns to normal.