

# 10 Things I Wish I'd Known Before a Mommy Makeover

By JenBob

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[JenBob](#), a RealSelf user, wrote the article below as part of the Mommy Makeover forums. Get more advice, read reviews and look at before and after photos and more at RealSelf.

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After getting a mommy makeover ([see my posting on RealSelf](#)), I came up with a top 10 list of things I wish I knew ahead of time!

**1. Guilty as charged.** As most moms do, I tend to put everyone else first. A lot of times that is why women tend to feel like they have lost their identities. It's hard to spend that much money on yourself, especially for aesthetic reasons. It seems okay to spend it on a car or a trip, but for some reason the thought of spending that money on your body is frowned upon. To some that may seem vain or boastful. For me it was about a self confidence that I had yet to achieve, a love of self that I have longed for my entire life. When I look in the mirror I like what I see now. When I feel good about myself...inside and out...I am a better woman, a better wife, and a better mom. It is absolutely normal to feel guilty about spending money on a mommy makeover and it is okay to finally put yourself first. It is the best money I have ever spent...just ask my family.

**2. What to tell the kids.** This was a big one for me. I am a mom of two young girls (5 and 2). I grew up with a horrible body image and the last thing I wanted was to implement that to my daughters. I was concerned about what to tell the oldest, the two-year-old really didn't understand. I thought about saying, "Well, you and your sister ruined my body while I was pregnant with you both." But then I thought maybe that was too harsh. (Note the sarcasm). I have tried really hard not to down myself in front of them, calling myself too fat, or commenting on my huge belly. They see me exercise and make healthy choices, but I didn't want them to know that I didn't like my body. So I tried to keep it simple. The day before surgery I told my oldest daughter that I was going to have an operation to fix my tummy (I didn't go into the whole boobey thing). She of course asked why, I told her because the doctor said so. I was prepared for more questions but she seemed satisfied with that. I was informed by the ladies on this site that the best thing to do with boys, if they are older,

is tell them you are having female surgery. They will shut right up and have no more questions. Nothing is more embarrassing than talking female issues with your mom.

**3. I'm a big girl now.** Most mommy makeovers include lipo and a tummy tuck. Which probably means you will be lucky enough to wear a skin-tight crotchless compression garment. I, as most women, chose to wear panties over this outfit so I didn't feel as if all my "stuff" was being squished out. (Think of baboons....ewww, or don't.) Now, the tricky part here is the first couple of days after surgery. You will spend quite a bit of time on the toilet the first time you try to pee, similar to what it is like after giving birth. After a couple tries, it gets better. However, when you are taking pain medication and muscle relaxers on a regular basis, your mind may be fuzzy a bit. I had the great luck of forgetting I had those panties on and peeing straight through them...twice. Yes, not once, but twice. I was starting to think I might have to revert back to diapers but I graduated and learned how to use the potty like a big girl. Also, you will probably not poop for several days at first, so expect a good 3-5 days worth of poop on your first time. With that being said, consider pulling your garment down for that endeavor. The back to front wiping thing can be tricky in that thing. I'm just saying, not that it happened or anything.....I'm just saying...okay...next subject please.

**4. Hello Dolly!** If you decide to get implants please remember that objects may appear larger than they actually are. When I first took a glance at my new girls, I thought "Holy Mary Mother of God, what have I done?!" I looked like Dolly Parton, or for younger ones, Beth from Dog the Bounty Hunter. This is NOT your final look. Please don't freak out. The swelling takes a while to go down and for the implants to "drop" into place. After about a week your PS will probably give you the go ahead to start massaging them. Massaging the implants will help them soften up and find their final resting place. Your significant other will love this, and surprisingly, so will you. I was shocked to find how much I actually liked touching my own breasts. It sounds perverted, I know, but if you are used to your "ladies" hanging out down by your belly, then you will see how nice it is to hold them, let go, and be fascinated that they no longer fall down so low anymore. I can now understand why men are always holding onto their own "boys". They are proud of them. I have caught myself with one hand on the remote and the other on one of my breasts. So relax, and let the boobs fall where they may.

**5. Phantom of the itch.** I knew going into the tummy tuck part of the mommy makeover that my belly would be numb. It is a freaky and strange feeling. It is almost like you are rubbing on someone else's tummy. I had heard before about people who have had an arm or leg amputated and still felt the feeling of it being there, the phantom limb syndrome. I was not prepared for that with my belly. Every now and then, I will get an itch, go to scratch it, and realize it is where my belly is numb. Scratching a numb belly doesn't relieve the itch. Simple right? Well I have a masters degree and it took several times scratching before I got that one.

**6. Sit. Stay. Good girl.** Once again, most mommy makeovers include a tummy tuck. This is a huge procedure and as most of you have surely read, it is a good idea to take off as much time as possible from your job. I was fortunate enough to take 2 weeks off from my PAID position. I capitalize paid, because as all moms know, the mom position is considered a "non for profit" position. Rarely do we moms put in a request for vacation from that position, so therefore we tend to work every day of the year, even if we are taking a vacation from our "paid jobs". As most moms, I am an expert at multitasking. It was killing me to sit there and not do anything. The first 3 days or so you have no choice, your body will not allow it. I will admit that I probably did more than I should have. Looking back, I wish I would have taken more advantage of the quiet time and rested and relaxed. I was convinced that if I didn't do it, it wouldn't get done, and it wouldn't get done right. I was wrong. Trust your loved ones. My husband was amazing. He became Mr. Mom and was pretty darn good at it. I have never given him enough credit in that department. Granted, it may have not been done the way I do it, but he stepped up and took charge. And if you don't have someone doing those household chores....so what. Just take this time for yourself and give your body a chance to heal.

**7. All aboard...the Bi-Polar Express.** This is a BIG one. Having your body cut upon, stitched up, and hung up to dry is traumatic. Throw a few pain meds into the mix and you will turn into an emotional tornado. I was known to go from ecstatic to tears in 6.9 seconds flat. Top that!! Be aware that this will be an issue, and emotions will be crazy. Explain this to your loved ones and the people caring for you so they don't call the men in white coats with the strait jackets. When I felt teary, I would cry. It's ok, you have a permit to go crazy, take advantage of it. When I was feeling really down and out, I typically would go to bed and nap it off. Use this site. [Realself.com](http://www.realself.com) is full of women who are going through the same

thing. Use them to lean on and talk to. The ladies I have met on here have been A HUGE support to me and I couldn't have gotten through this without them. Well, I would have, but I would have probably been divorced and sitting in a mental institution. Thanks Ladies!!!

**8. Let's get physical.** Most people who are looking into plastic surgery are doing so because exercise has not been effective on certain areas of the body. There are only so many chest flies one can do before you realize they won't make your boobies stand up and say hello. However, there are some who think this is the alternative to diet and exercise. If that is you....you are wrong. I truly believe my fitness level aided in my recovery time. And I know that I will have to work twice as hard to keep my new body looking tip top. The more active and healthy you are before surgery, the better your recovery will be. You will heal faster, feel better sooner, and be back to the gym before you know it. As you heal, stay away from processed and salty foods, soda, and fried foods. You will swell like the Stay Puff Marshmallow Man and be so uncomfortable. When your doctor says its okay, get back into exercising and let your body lead the way. It will tell you what is too much and when to quit.

**9. Don't be naive: do the research.** When I decide to do something I go full speed, head first. In this case, you need to know what you are getting into. When I began this journey, I had no idea that there was a difference between a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon and a Board Certified Cosmetic Surgeon. Now, I will not step into the argument of who is more qualified; just know who you are dealing with. Ask around; find people who have used him/her. The doctor will give you referrals, but let's face it; they are not stupid enough to give you someone who is unhappy with their work. If you know anyone who has had plastic surgery get as much info from them as possible. There will always be someone who is unhappy with a certain PS or procedure

they have had done. But there is a HUGE difference between a "well, I just didn't like his/her bedside manner" or "I just didn't see a huge difference in my lipo" and the "he completely disfigured me". Be wary of the flashy salesman. Go with your gut and ask LOTS of questions. The good ones will sit with you and take as much time as needed.

**10. Avoid the Debbie Downers.** We all know one....the Debbie Downers, the buzz kill. And most of us will have to deal with a few after surgery. It is really hard when you feel that you don't have the support from your loved ones. The choice to have a mommy makeover is strictly yours and hopefully you are doing this for you and only you. I have had a few family members of mine that I surprisingly haven't received support from. It is hurtful, especially since they saw me struggle with my weight and self esteem issues for years. A lot of people will see it as a "waste of money". I started feeling the need to explain my reasoning for having the surgery. I wanted them to know that it was not out of vanity, or selfishness. But remember the old saying "Those convinced against their will, are of the same opinion still." It really doesn't matter. As much as I wanted them to hear me out and understand my reasoning, they won't. If they love you, they will keep their negative comments to themselves and support you no matter what. But you may have those who love you yet still feel the need to give their opinion even when not asked. My response to those people would be a nod and a smile. (Believe me, I know it's hard) If you want, throw in a "please keep your negative comments to yourself" or a "if you don't have anything nice to say...". But my advice is to steer clear of the "screw you" sort of comment. It is just not worth it. As long as you know why you are doing this that is all you need. For me, being able to look in the mirror, smile and for the first time in my life, love what I see...well that is priceless to me. And for those who can't see past the money or their opinions, they are missing out on watching someone they love transforming into the person they have always dreamed of being.

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  - Cost <http://www.realself.com/Mommy-makeover/cost>
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## 12 Things I Want Patients to Know Before Tummy Tuck Surgery

By Dr. Elizabeth Lee

### Dr. Elizabeth Lee, a board certified plastic surgeon, gives the doctors perspective on preparing for a Tummy Tuck

Healing well and getting the best result from a tummy tuck depends on a partnership developed between me as the surgeon and you as the patient. What I do in the operating room is only part of the ultimate outcome. You have to heal.

Healing requires a lot of attention to taking care of yourself, probably more than most women are in the habit of doing. For a majority of my women patients, this requires a fair amount of planning. So if there are twelve things I want a patient to know before surgery to plan for a smooth recovery it is these:

#### 1. Plan enough time off

This is not simply time off work. You must also make arrangements for care of your children, for care of your home, for care of other family members for whom you may be responsible (husbands, elderly parents, etc.) Two weeks is the minimum before returning to a desk job. Working only ½ days the first week back to work is even better. You will not be able to do heavy physical work, work that involves travel or a lot of standing for three weeks.

#### 2. Make sure you have enough help lined up

This probably means full time help with young children AND an adult to help you get in and out of bed, prepare food for you, help you dress for the first few days after the surgery. One additional adult in the house (you don't count) is only adequate in those first several days if your children are at an age where they can be left unsupervised at the drop of a hat for 5 minutes or so when the adult needs to be with you. By around the third day after surgery, you will be able to do more for yourself so that one adult (in addition to you) in the house is usually enough.

#### 3. You should do little or nothing besides caring for yourself in the first 2 weeks

Even if you think you feel well enough to "do some work" you are not to try. This means no cooking, no answering emails (work related or personal), no child care, no laundry, no housework, no cleaning out that closet you have been

dying to organize. It is entirely too easy for many of my patients to focus on a task and not be aware of their body's needs. In the first week after surgery you need to pay careful attention to yourself so that you lie down as soon as you are tired and eat as soon as you are hungry. If you give yourself the space to answer your body's signals, you will find yourself suddenly overcome by the need to sleep or the need to eat and you should do just that.

By the second week, you will be feeling better, but certainly not back to yourself. You will probably be able to stand up straight and move around the house for several hours at a time. You will be able to spend time with your kids, but should not plan to be their full time caregiver. You will still feel suddenly exhausted or hungry and should have enough other help that you can excuse yourself and go lie down as soon as you feel the need.

I am aware as I give these instructions to my patients in the office that a glassy look often comes into their eyes as they think, "Oh, she has no idea how tough I am. I know that her other patients are all softies, but I delivered a baby and went right back to the rice paddies." Trust me on this, surgery is a big deal and your body is going to take what it needs. You CAN fight it and not plan adequately for it. Doing this is likely to prolong your feeling lousy and wiped out and possibly increase your risk of complications. You will recover better and faster if you accept you body's need for attention and rest, and plan adequately for it.

#### 4. Expect to feel wiped out for six weeks

By the time you go back to a desk job at two weeks, you will feel OK focusing on your job. Any pain you still have should be managed by Ibuprofen. Expect though that when you get home from work you will be wiped out. You may find yourself needing to go to bed at 7:30 PM. Most of my patients are used to being active for several hours after everyone else in the house is asleep. For six weeks, you will not be able to do this. It is very common to have patients in for a postoperative visit around three weeks after the surgery, stressed out that they can't do what they are used

to doing and they don't feel like themselves. I remind them that they probably don't remember they have just had surgery because they are not in a lot of pain, but that they have three weeks more to go for this intense healing period. When you heal you need more sleep. Most patients are pretty consistent at telling me that the first day of week seven, their stamina is back and they feel like themselves. It can take longer if you don't allow yourself those six weeks sleeping more and accomplishing less than you are used to.

#### **5. Nutrition is very important**

In my area, a fair number of my smart, professional women patients don't sit down to eat regular meals. Many of us also diet constantly. Nutritional habits that may work to maintain you when you are healthy can become a huge stress when you have a surgical wound to heal. You have to eat well. You should have protein with every meal, at least two eggs or four egg whites, two pieces of citrus fruit per day (whole fruit, not juice) and then whatever else you want. It is not healthy to try to lose weight during this time. You must eat well to heal well.

#### **6. Full healing takes up to a year**

A majority of swelling, pain and postoperative fatigue resolves in the first six weeks. The healing process goes on for months after that. The scar which will initially be dark or red and bumpy under the skin will soften, flatten and fade. The skin on the belly will initially be numb. Sensation will return in fits and starts. Your abdominal wall will initially feel stiff and swollen, particularly the area below the belly button. This swelling will usually be worse in the evening and better in the morning, but the fluctuations will improve slowly over months. While improvement in your shape and appearance will be obvious within days after surgery, things will continue to change and improve over that first year.

#### **7. The first three days after a tummy tuck are the worst**

I do most of my tummy tucks as out patient surgery. The patients come in for the operation and go home to their own beds the same day. There are many reasons for this approach, not the least of which is that the hospital is not a great place for an otherwise healthy patient. Most patients come in to see me in the office the day after surgery and ask me how I could have let them do this to themselves. By the next morning, they start to feel better each day. By day three, there is light at the end of the tunnel and they are starting to be happy they have had the surgery.

#### **8. Pain medication does not take the pain away, it makes it better**

I typically prescribe some narcotic containing compound like Vicodin and Ibuprofen, to be taken in staggered doses around the clock. The majority of patients are off narcotic and only on Ibuprofen by several days post op, not because I won't renew the narcotic prescription, but because Ibuprofen is enough to bring the pain down to a comfortable level.

#### **9. You will have surgical drains for seven to ten days**

These require a bit of care, emptying them regularly and measuring the drainage. It is not hard to do and the nurses in the recovery room will teach you and your caregiver. All the "significant others" involved in the care of my patients have done this with no problem. I remove the drains in the office when the 24 hour total drainage is low enough. This is usually around day five for the first and two days later for the second. Taking them out is easy and fast, so don't worry. The biggest problem for most patients is that they cannot get these drains wet, so will not be able to shower or take a bath until both are out. Hair washing in the sink is ok as are sponge baths, but the drain sites must stay dry.

#### **10. You will probably not be able to drive for ten days to two weeks**

This varies from patient to patient, but an absolute requirement is that you be off all narcotic so you are driving sober. The second requirement is more of a judgment call on the part of the patient. The seatbelt lies right across the surgical site. You must feel well enough that this will not be a distraction from driving. An instant worrying about your belly may cause hesitation before slamming on the breaks. This half a second delay can be the difference between having or avoiding an accident. Most women drive by ten days, some sooner, some later.

#### **11. You will need some time off from your exercise routine and heavy lifting**

There is no cookbook to follow for when you will be able to get back to exercising. Most patients are not even ready to think about it for at least a month. Postoperative patients usually know when they are ready to start working out again. My advice is always that you start with 1/10<sup>th</sup> of what you usually do, then stop and take an inventory. If the activity has caused discomfort that does not resolve within 10 minutes of rest, you probably over did it. If you feel fine, double the exercise the next day and take inventory again. Build up slowly and don't push. You will probably not be doing any abdominal workouts for two months.

#### **12. Choose the right surgeon for you**

This relates back to my introductory paragraph, and is not the least significant of recommendations just because it is the last. Your eventual outcome is a team effort. You must feel comfortable with your surgeon. You will need to see a lot of

him or her during your recovery. Postoperative visits are usually frequent in the first two weeks and less as time goes on. Questions and concerns will arise, and you should feel able to get in touch with your surgeon's office and have these issues addressed. In my opinion, no question is too silly or stupid. It actually is better for me to see a patient and find that what they were concerned about is not a problem than to see them and discover that there really is a complication. Pay attention to how you feel speaking with your surgeon before surgery. Communication will probably not get easier after the procedure when you don't feel well and are anxious that something may not be healing normally.

Tummy tucks should be done by surgeons certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery. While other surgeons may have expertise in surgery of the face, only those Boarded by the American Board of Plastic Surgery have received proper training in surgery of the body and the face.

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