

THE PROCEDURE

An arm lift is an operation to remove redundant skin +/- fat from the arms and tighten the remaining skin.

WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

An arm lift (brachioplasty) may be performed as an isolated procedure or can be performed in conjunction with other body contouring procedures. It is normally performed under general anaesthetic and usually uses the combined surgical techniques of liposuction and skin excision. It usually leaves a scar that runs on the inside of the arm from the elbow down to the side of the lateral chest wall below the armpit. Sometimes, a limited incision arm lift, in which the scar sits within the armpit is possible, depending on the skin and fat distribution.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

An arm lift addresses the loose excess skin that may develop in association with age or weight loss. The surgery improves the contour and shape of the arm. After the surgery, many people feel able to wear clothes they had previously felt uncomfortable wearing.

HOW LONG DOES THE SURGERY TAKE?

The surgery takes 1-2 hours depending on the amount of reduction required

WHAT IS THE RECOVERY PERIOD?

The procedure is either performed as a day case or you might stay in hospital overnight. You will have tapes on the wound and sometimes a support bandage will be worn after the operation, or alternatively commercially available support garments may be worn. Bruising and swelling lasts 1-2 weeks. You will have to minimise daily activities following the procedure to allow the wounds adequate time to heal. You should be able to return to light duties after 2 weeks, following a postoperative wound check. Gentle walking should start soon after surgery to minimise the risks of complications such as blood clots (see below). Please do not lift anything heavy for 6-weeks after surgery.

HOW LONG BEFORE DAILY ACTIVITIES MAY BE RESUMED?

You should only undertake light sedentary activities after your operation. Strenuous exercise or sporting activity should be avoided until 6-weeks post-surgery. You may be able to drive at 2-3 weeks but remember that you need to be comfortable in performing an emergency stop or similar manoeuvre.

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WHAT ARE THE SUCCESS RATES?

You will notice a visible improvement in your arm contour immediately, however the final result should be judged 1-year after surgery, once the scars and residual swelling have settled down. The results of arm lifts are usually very good and long-lasting, but large fluctuations in weight and the normal effects of ageing can lead to recurrence of loose skin over time.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?

The following complications may be associated with this procedure:

- Swelling of the arm which may take a long time to resolve in some people
- Bleeding/haematoma (a collection of blood) requiring a return to the operating theatre
- Wound infection, delayed healing and fat necrosis (higher risk in diabetics and recent ex-smokers)
- Unsightly scarring in some people
- Nerve injury resulting in numb patches of skin in the arm or forearm
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolus (PE) -these are blood clots that may occur in the leg (DVT) and travel to the lung (PE) which may be very serious – fortunately they are uncommon in arm lifting surgery.
- Suture spitting - this refers to the deeper dissolvable stitches poking out of the wound sometime after the surgery. This happens because occasionally these stitches do not dissolve as quickly as intended, and they then try to work their way out of the wound in much the same way as a splinter would. These stitches can either be removed at one of your hospital visits or they may work their way out on their own.
- Further surgery may be needed for any of the above

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