

GENERAL INFORMATION

Brachioplasty (arm lift) is a surgical procedure that is used to help remove excess skin and fat tissue from the axilla and upper arm. Brachioplasty is not a surgical treatment for being overweight. Obese individuals who intend to lose weight should postpone all forms of body-contouring surgeries until they have reached a stable weight.

There is a variety of different techniques used by plastic surgeons for brachioplasty. Brachioplasty can be combined with other forms of body-contouring surgeries, including suction-assisted lipectomy or other elective surgeries.

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

Brachioplasty is an elective surgical operation. Alternative forms of management include not treating the areas of loose skin and fat deposits with surgery. Liposuction surgery may be a surgical alternative to brachioplasty if there is good skin tone and localized fat deposits in an individual of normal weight. Diet and exercise regimens may be of benefit for overall reduction of excess body fat. Risks and potential complications are also associated with alternative forms of surgical treatment.

SPECIFIC RISKS OF BRACHIOPLASTY SURGERY

Change in Sensation:

It is common to experience diminished (or loss of) skin sensation in areas that have had the surgery (upper arm, armpit). It is rare to experience permanent changes in sensation in the hands and forearms after brachioplasty, but it is possible. Diminished (or complete loss of) skin sensation may not totally resolve after brachioplasty. There is a small risk of motor nerve injury, which may result in impairment of upper extremity/hand function.

Skin Discoloration/Swelling:

Bruising and swelling normally occurs following brachioplasty. The skin in or near the surgical site can appear either lighter or darker than surrounding skin. Although uncommon, swelling (including the forearms and hands) and skin discoloration may persist for long periods of time. And, in rare situations, may be permanent.

Sensation of Arm Tightness:

After lifting the arm skin, there can be a tight sensation in the arm and/or armpit skin. There could potentially be loss of range of motion of the shoulder. This usually subsides over time. Additional surgery may be required to correct this problem.

Delayed Healing:

Wound disruption or delayed wound healing is possible. Some areas of skin may die or slough off. This may require frequent dressing changes or further surgeries to remove the non-healed tissue. Individuals who have decreased blood supply to the tissue from past surgeries or radiation therapies may be at increased risk for wound healing and poor surgical outcomes. Smokers have a greater risk of skin loss and wound healing complications.

Seromas (Fluid Collection):

Though infrequently, fluid may accumulate between the skin and the underlying tissues following surgery, trauma, or vigorous exercises. Should this problem occur, it may require additional procedures for drainage of the fluid. To help prevent this, surgical drains are usually employed.

Re-loosening of Skin:

Almost all patients who have this procedure will notice re-loosening of the skin over time. This occurs due to the body's inherent response to stretch. Patients who have lost massive amounts of weight are prone to this phenomenon. No matter how tight the surgeon makes your skin at the time of surgery, it will loosen to a certain degree with time. Each person's skin loosens to a different degree.

Asymmetry:

Symmetrical body appearance may not result after surgery. Factors such as skin tone, fat deposits, skeletal prominence, and muscle tone may contribute to normal asymmetry in body features. Most patients have differences between the right and left side of their bodies before any surgery is performed. Additional surgeries may be necessary to attempt to diminish asymmetry.