

# post-baby body restoration

Sydney plastic surgeon **Dr Kouros Tavakoli** outlines the options available to get your pre-pregnancy body back. Francis Herron reports.

For many women, having a baby takes a toll on their body and the shape they are left with post-pregnancy can be a cause of concern, affecting self-esteem and confidence levels. In a study by United Kingdom *Mother & Baby* magazine, 86 percent of women surveyed said they felt less attractive post-pregnancy, while a similar number were unhappy with their weight and shocked by the changes to their body after having a baby.

"Yummy mummy" celebrities such as Katie Holmes, Heidi Klum and Jennifer Garner seem to regain their post-baby figures in double-quick time, and now it appears that here in Australia women are equally determined to take steps to restore both their pre-baby body and confidence. In fact a large number are choosing cosmetic surgery to help restore their shape and are taking the opportunity to correct long-standing problem areas, which may have become more prominent during pregnancy.

Sydney plastic surgeon Dr Kouros Tavakoli estimates up to 30 percent of his female patients have come to see him because they want to improve their bodies after childbirth. All of these women, he says, have a specific goal in mind and, somewhat surprisingly, it is not one that involves an idealised 'new' body or perfect physique. Their aim is restoration, not transformation. 'These women are not wanting to create something new, they want to restore what they had previously,' Dr Tavakoli explains. 'They have 50 or 60 years ahead of them and want to keep looking their best.'

There are numerous options available to women who want to tackle post-pregnancy problems such as excess fat and skin around the abdomen and drooping, sagging breasts. Troublesome areas that have caused some concern before pregnancy, such as love handles, can be exacerbated after giving birth. However, these issues can be addressed with surgery, and according to Dr Tavakoli,

the top three procedures requested by mothers who come to see him are breast enhancement, abdominoplasty and liposculpture.

## Breast enhancement

The degree of change experienced in the breasts depends on whether patients have breastfed and, if so, for how long. 'The more a woman has breastfed, the more dramatic the changes that occur in her breasts usually are,' says Dr Tavakoli. Most women opt for a breast augmentation procedure but if there is no change to the volume of the breast, a breast lift might be enough to achieve the result they want. However other woman may require both a breast reduction and lift procedure to obtain their desired shape, he says.

## Abdominoplasty

According to Dr Tavakoli, the abdomen is the area most affected by pregnancy as the abdominal wall becomes lax due to stretching. An abdominoplasty procedure, also known as a tummy tuck, can restore a woman's post-pregnancy tummy and the procedure can be combined with liposculpture to offer an even better result. 'Abdominoplasty, when combined with liposculpture, can remove excess skin and fat from the abdomen, repair any underlying damage to the abdominal muscles and reposition the umbilicus,' says Dr Tavakoli.

## Liposculpture

As well as being effective when combined with abdominoplasty, liposculpture can be used alone to treat common problem areas such as love handles and inner and outer thighs. As Dr Tavakoli explains, 'These could be areas that troubled the patient prior to pregnancy but they may have become more prominent post-pregnancy.' The most important thing, according to him, is that the treated area remains in proportion with the rest of the patient's body.

While these procedures can offer great results for women who want to restore their pre-pregnancy body, Dr Tavakoli stresses that those who undergo an abdominoplasty or liposculpture procedure need to commit to a healthy lifestyle, involving a sensible diet and exercise regime, to maintain the results.

He screens prospective patients to ensure they are not suffering from post-natal depression and has a policy of not operating on recently pregnant women until the mother's last child is at least 18 months old. 'I usually advise patients to complete all their pregnancies before commencing surgery,' he says. 'As long as the expectations are realistic I find the overall satisfaction rate in this group of patients is very high.'

It's clear that for some women who are unhappy with their post-pregnancy appearance, a cosmetic surgery procedure could offer the ideal way to restore their figure and confidence levels. **acsm**



BEFORE



AFTER abdominoplasty and breast augmentation by Dr Tavakoli



BEFORE



AFTER abdominoplasty and breast enhancement by Dr Tavakoli



BEFORE



AFTER abdominoplasty breast enhancement, and liposculpture by Dr Tavakoli



Actual Patient