

THE IPANEMA TUMMY TUCK



by Robert H. Gotkin, MD, FACS

Tall and Tan and Young and Lovely... and when she passes, each one she passes goes "Ahh".

Recalling the 1960's, women around the world wanted to emulate the flawless beauty and sex appeal of Rio de Janeiro's girl from Ipanema. Fifty years later, not much has changed. Women still want the look romanticized in song and seek plastic surgeons able to create that body and that timeless image.

"Carol" was a 39 year old woman, happily married, who had her third child almost 2 years ago. Her life, albeit hectic, couldn't be better, but she lamented the loss of "the way I looked before I had children." Yes, she had gained a little weight since her twenties, but marriage and three children will do that. She wasn't overweight; in fact, at 5'5" tall and 135 pounds, her BMI was 22.5 – normal. But she had excess tummy fat; loose, lax abdominal skin; and stretch marks seemed to be everywhere from her belly button down. She started to cry in my office when she talked about how she used to look, but her tears turned to joy when I told her how easy it is to restore that look. Three weeks after an *"Ipanema Tummy Tuck,"* she was back to her normal activities – going to the gym, driving the kids to after-school sports, and ready to re-join her tennis pals for her weekly doubles match.

"Amanda" was 47 years old and struggled with her weight for as long as she can remember. At her peak, she weighed 262 pounds and at 5'3" tall, her BMI was 46.4 – morbidly obese. She had tried everything – diets, exercise, a personal trainer – but nothing worked. She finally decided to have weight loss (bariatric) surgery. About a year and a half later, she came to my office. She had lost 112 pounds and now weighed 150; she had been stable at that weight for over a year and wanted to

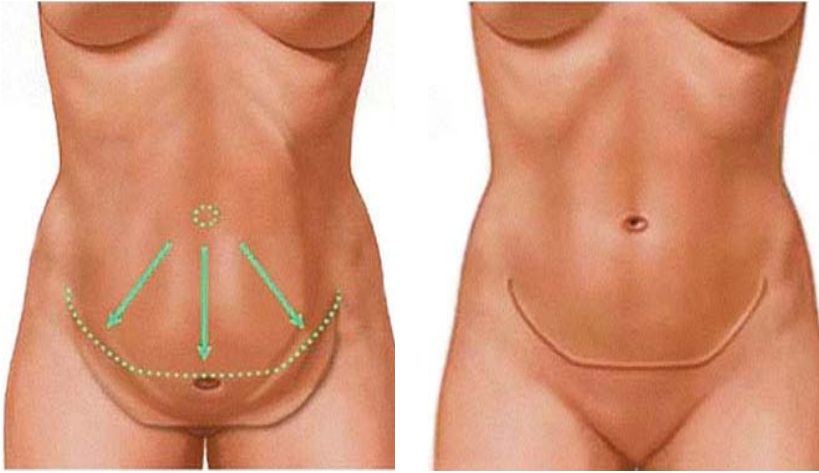
address all the loose, hanging skin she had "everywhere." What bothered her the most was the appearance of her entire trunk – the hanging skin on her abdomen and the droopiness of her breasts. Her thighs and arms had skin laxity as well, but these areas were of secondary importance to her. We talked about an *Ipanema Tummy Tuck* and a breast lift and augmentation to restore some fullness to her "deflated" breasts. She looked at photos of other similar patients I had treated and decided to go for it. Two weeks following surgery, she was already on JDate looking to begin a new chapter in her life. She had never been married because she was always so self-conscious about the way she looked. She was determined and her effervescent personality shined through, but her weight loss and her new look finally gave her the confidence to brave the dating scene.

These are real women with real problems that I encounter in my plastic surgery practice every day. They want to look better in spite of their problems and body contouring surgery can make it happen.

SAFER, LESS INVASIVE SURGERY: THE BIRTH OF THE IPANEMA TUMMY TUCK

Over the past 25 years, liposuction has become the most commonly performed body contouring procedure. In fact, it is the most common cosmetic surgical procedure performed worldwide. However, liposuction has a limited ability to tighten loose skin. Even "energy-assisted" liposuction, such as laser-assisted liposuction, can only tighten skin by about 20%. This is often inadequate in the face of the skin laxity seen after pregnancy or significant weight loss. A tummy tuck is the only surgical procedure that will afford the cosmetic result that patients – both men and women – desire.

However, conventional tummy tucks are associated



Ipanema Tummy Tuck: Typical Incisions and Skin Removal.

This brings me to my story. Several years ago, I traveled to the south of Brazil to perform a tummy tuck with a good friend of mine – another plastic surgeon who lives and works there – on a woman who had traveled from Rio de Janeiro for her surgery. I also performed Smartlipo® – laser-assisted liposuction – as part of her overall procedure.

with a complication rate that is higher than all other cosmetic surgical procedures. In addition, the prolonged recovery period is often a deterrent to the patient who really could benefit from the surgery. Of all the cosmetic procedures performed by plastic surgeons, the tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, seems to create the greatest sense of apprehension among the very patients who would benefit the most from the procedure.

Compared to traditional liposuction or the more aggressive power-assisted liposuction, laser-assisted liposuction is less traumatic. The laser energy of Smartlipo “melts” the fat, converts it into a liquefied state and requires much less suction to remove the liquefied fat. In addition, the laser energy coagulates small blood vessels leading to less bleeding during the procedure and less bruising afterwards. The laser energy also stimulates new collagen production and has a tightening effect on the



42 Year Old Woman after 3 Children. Before and Six Months after Ipanema Tummy Tuck.

skin. Smartlipo also has the benefits of very small instrumentation (cannulas that are 1-2 millimeters in diameter) thereby reducing incision size and the trauma of surgery.

So here I was in the south of Brazil, and my friend and I found ourselves discussing how we could make the tummy tuck procedure safer and less invasive. Our goal – as is always the case in cosmetic surgery – was to deliver a superior cosmetic result and to diminish the extent and time of recovery and to decrease the risk of adverse side effects and complications.

As a firm believer that Smartlipo was a less invasive, less traumatic form of liposuction than conventional liposuction, I suggested that we use the benefits of Smartlipo in the tummy tuck procedure that we were doing. This was the birth of the Laser-Assisted Lipo – the *Ipanema Tummy Tuck* – named for that very first patient from Rio that had the procedure!

CYNOSURE SCIENTIFIC STUDIES: TROUBLE-FREE RECOVERY

The patients we treated in Brazil had an amazing recovery! When I returned to the U.S., I refined the procedure and was able to enlist the support of Cynosure, the laser company that makes the Smartlipo device, to conduct a scientific study that would help prove the benefits of the our *Ipanema Tummy Tuck*. Thirty-two patients were enrolled in the study; all of them had the *Ipanema Tummy Tuck* and they were followed post-operatively for 12 – 22 months. Like our Brazilian patients, the ones here in the U.S. also had extraordinarily trouble-free recoveries. This was quite different than I had observed for over 20 years previously performing conventional tummy tucks. This is likely because the *Ipanema Tummy Tuck* preserves many internal structures typically sacrificed in a conventional abdominoplasty; therefore, the procedure is safer and the healing is quicker. Indeed, the recovery was more rapid, more comfortable and, in many cases, did not even

require any post-operative narcotics for pain relief. Many patients took only plain acetaminophen during the entire post-operative period. Preliminary results of this study were presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery in Phoenix, AZ in April, 2010.

I continue to perform the *Ipanema Tummy Tuck* with tremendous success for my patients. These patients continue to be astounded at the ease of recovery... especially with the pre-conceived notions that many of them bring to surgery. This is a safer, less invasive tummy tuck with all the cosmetic benefits of conventional abdominoplasty and less problems during and after surgery.

TALL AND ~~TAN~~ THIN AND YOUNG AND LOVELY

Heeding the dangers of sun and tanning in 2012 (and being a physician advisor to the Skin Cancer Foundation), I can no longer advocate the “tall and tan and young lovely” girl who strolled the beaches of Rio de Janeiro. But who wouldn't want to be that woman who “when she passes, each one she passes goes Ahh.”? ❖



Robert H. Gotkin, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Cosmetique Dermatology, Laser & Plastic Surgery, LLP

625 Park Avenue, New York, NY: P) 212-794-4000

31 Northern Blvd., Greenvale, NY:P) 516-484-9000

www.cosmetiqueMD.com