



MUMMY MAKEOVER

WHILE BECOMING A MOTHER CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCES IN A WOMAN'S LIFE, THERE IS no doubt that many women are less than thrilled by the changes that pregnancy brings about in their bodies. Few women are able to regain their pre-pregnancy bodies through simple diet and exercise, and while some women just accept these changes, there are others who want to improve or correct these changes through a "mummy makeover".

A "mummy makeover" refers to both surgical and non-surgical procedures that help a woman to correct, improve or remove unwanted post-pregnancy changes in their bodies and faces. It may refer to a single or multiple procedures, but it is always tailored towards an individual mother's needs and concerns.

Take, for instance, an expecting mother's breasts and belly. During pregnancy, a woman's skin and muscles beneath the belly will stretch to accommodate the growing foetus even as the breasts enlarge in preparation for lactation. After childbirth, however, with the abdomen suddenly becoming "empty", the skin around the area tends to become loose and often is unable to shrink back to its normal size. Furthermore, muscles that have become separated do not come back together naturally, leaving the post-pregnancy belly with excess loose skin and a tendency to bulge. What's more, when a mother stops breastfeeding, her breasts will usually lose some of their volume, become somewhat "deflated", and look "droopy". The nipple and areola may also change in both size and shape as a result of pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Post-pregnancy changes can be difficult or in some cases impossible to reverse, even with constant diet and exercise. This is not to say that a good diet and exercise regime does not help. Regardless of whether women opt for a mummy makeover, they should maintain a healthy lifestyle through a sensible diet and exercise regime. Even during pregnancy, it is important to eat sensibly and have regular light workouts to prevent excessive pregnancy weight gain.

For women who do opt for a mummy makeover, some popular procedures include breast augmentation or breast lift to replace the volume loss or reshape the breast. Breast augmentation can be achieved through the use of implants, or in selected cases, the patient's own fat, while breast lift is a procedure to rearrange and reshape the breast tissue.

The belly is of course another important aspect of a mummy makeover. Abdominoplasty, commonly known as a "tummy tuck", tightens the muscles around the belly that have been stretched and separated during pregnancy, and removes excess skin, fat and stretch marks. Liposuction can also be performed for localised stubborn fat deposits, while Thermage can help tighten the loose skin around the belly and hips.

Even as they try to regain their pre-pregnancy bodies, it is important that women not neglect their faces. Juggling multiple mummy duties can take their toll and can make women look somewhat tired and drained. A medical grade skin care regime and chemical peels will help achieve and maintain a more radiant complexion, while Thermage, lasers and injectable fillers can also help to rejuvenate tired-looking faces. Some women can also benefit from surgical procedures for optimal facial rejuvenation.

It should however be noted that women who are heavy smokers are discouraged from surgical procedures, as smoking has been known to both interfere with the healing process and increase the risk of complications. Certain mummy makeover procedures, such as a tummy tuck or breast lift, are best done after a woman has completed her family as, if she intends to have more children, the same pregnancy changes will occur again, essentially undoing the work that a procedure may have achieved. ■

