

BRACHIAPLASTY FAQs

What is a Brachioplasty(Arm lift) procedure?

An arm lift or brachioplasty is a plastic surgery procedure to reduce sagging, loose skin as well as any excess fatty tissue of the upper arm. It is performed primarily to reduce the circumference of the upper arm and to tighten the skin thereby dramatically improving the contour and appearance of the arms.

Am I a suitable candidate?

The best candidates are men and women who are within several pounds (i.e. 10%) of their ideal weight. If you are significantly more than this you will be asked to reduce some weight before going ahead with any surgery. Ideal candidates also possess loose enough skin and tissue laxity to allow a good outcome of the operation. This will be assessed at your consultation. People with Hidradenitis Suppurativa, a persistent ongoing infection disorder of the sweat glands in their armpits, should not undergo Brachioplasty until treated appropriately. Women who have had Radical Mastectomy or extensive breast cancer surgery are also at risk of developing chronic arm swelling after undergoing this particular procedure and therefore should avoid this operation.

What does a Brachioplasty involve?

Incisions are made on the inside of the arm and may extend from the underarm (axilla) to just above the elbow. During the brachioplasty, excess skin and fat is removed whilst taking care to cauterise and stop any bleeding of the blood vessels. The incision length and pattern will depend on the amount and location of excess skin that is to be removed. Occasionally Liposuction is also used at the same time to reduce surrounding fat. Layers of sutures are then used to close the wounds and a light dressing is applied over the suture lines. A bandage is wrapped around your arms in order to apply some compression and minimise swelling. All sutures used are of the dissolving kind and will not need to be removed.

What can I expect after the surgery?

When you return to your room you will notice that your arms will be elevated on pillows as well as be wrapped up with compression bandages around them. You will be encouraged to move your hands and fingers to avoid any stiffness. After the general anaesthetic has worn off, you may experience some pain and discomfort. Thankfully a brachioplasty is not considered a particularly painful procedure and so appropriate pain killers should control this comfortably.

What are the scars like?

In fact scars are the greatest drawback in this operation. This is because in a standard brachioplasty the operation results in a permanent scar extending the length of the upper arm, from the armpit to the elbow which may be visible in short sleeve clothing. Unfortunately it is not usually possible to reduce the scar length in this procedure. In fact this is the main reason why many patients decide against having this procedure. This operation basically exchanges one cosmetic problem (loose skin) for another (scars). In general, only those with very loose saggy skin are most likely to find this exchange worthwhile. Those with a small amount of looseness will probably not want the scars. Although initially all scars are somewhat red and lumpy, with time(12-18 months) the scars usually settle and improve. Of course it is not possible to ultimately predict the appearance of anyone's scars.

What results can I expect?

The aim of this procedure is to remove any excess skin and fat around the arms in order to achieve a smoother, tauter looking appearance.

What could go wrong?

Whilst it is true that when a Brachioplasty is performed by a qualified plastic surgeon the risks are small, nonetheless, specific complications with this procedure can and do occur.



Quick Reference

-  **Surgery time**
90 minutes
-  **Anaesthetic used**
General anaesthetic
-  **Hospital stay**
Day case
-  **Pre admission tests required**
Blood tests +/- ECG
-  **Up and about**
Same day
-  **Washing**
Avoid showering incision for 1 week
-  **Driving**
2 weeks
-  **Exercise**
6 weeks
-  **Time off work**
2 weeks

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As in any procedure the risk of infection, bleeding and wound healing problems could arise. Thankfully these are minimised with appropriate care. At the time of surgery the small nerves that supply feeling to the skin on the inside of the arms are also damaged. This may cause changes in sensation including numbness in the surrounding areas. Unsightly or thickened scarring can also occur. You will be instructed on what measures can be taken to minimise these.

Is there any alternative to an Armlift procedure?

In situations when there is only slight sagging of the skin, moderate fat excess and good, relatively taut skin tone then there are a couple of other options. Liposuction is useful in these situations by removing the bulk of the excess fat in the region through tiny incisions however this is with the proviso that the skin has good skin elasticity. In this situation, providing there is good skin tone, the skin usually knits back into a new slimmer contour with the arm. Another option is a non surgical treatment using the Accent Radiofrequency device. This device is good at achieving some skin tightening and “melting” small amounts of fat. It certainly has been proven to work. However at least six sessions are usually required and the degree of skin tightening/fat reduction is usually quite modest. Sometimes both Liposuction followed by the Accent device is utilized to achieve a slimmer tauter contour of the arms, whilst avoiding the long scars associated with the Arm lift. A consultation will determine your suitability for either.

Is it very painful?

Although there will be some pain and discomfort, in general a brachioplasty is not considered one of the more painful procedures. Of course you will be given pain relief accordingly.

How long until I am back to normal following a Brachioplasty procedure?

Most patients will need 10-14 days off work. For more strenuous duties using the arms a period of 3 weeks off is recommended. After this point patients feel they can gradually start to resume their normal activities with a view to be able to exercise fully after 6 weeks following their surgery. Of course some degree of swelling and stiffness may still be present for a few months afterwards before it fully subsides.

What are the costs?

A surgeon's fee, anaesthetist's fee and hospital fees will be required. You will be given a breakdown of these costs on the day of your consultation.

How many Brachioplasty operations has Mr. Karidis performed?

In accordance with the National Healthcare Commission guidelines, and according to the last ten years of annual audit figures submitted to the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth in London, Mr. Karidis has performed over 100 Brachioplasty procedures.

How do I prepare for the operation?

It is always useful to allow yourself plenty of time to recover and organise sufficient time off work. 14 days off should give you sufficient time to allow any obvious swelling to subside. Ensure any blood tests or other tests that are required are undertaken well in advance to avoid any potential delays.

Is there post operation care?

We look forward to seeing you at the clinic around 7 and 14 days after your surgery in order to review your result and check all is healing well. This is usually extremely exciting as it will be the first peek at your new arms! Providing all is well, you will see Mr. Karidis at around 6 weeks post operation for a routine check up. Further appointments can of course be made if necessary.

Nurse top tip:

It is a good idea to apply silicone gel sheets to the scars from about 3-4 weeks afterwards to improve the scars.

How does travelling soon after surgery affect me?

After your operation you may feel a little drowsy from the anaesthetic and other medications. Therefore we strongly suggest that, if possible, you nominate a friend or family member to collect you. Alternatively, we can assist you in booking a taxi whilst you are in hospital.

What are the warning signs after a Brachioplasty procedure?

Please ensure you notify medical staff of any heavy bleeding, pain, excessive swelling, pockets of fluid or a persistent high temperature (above 37.5 degrees for 12 hours or more). Most often there is nothing to be concerned about, however, it is always best to check!

Are There Any Other Treatments That You Could Recommend?

Pulse dye laser(V-Beam) can improve and expedite the resolution of redness within the scars

Why Should I Choose Armlift Surgery?

Armlifts provides an excellent solution to individuals who are troubled by excess skin and fat around their arms that despite best efforts with diet and exercise simply cannot improve. Providing you accept a potentially lengthy scar, the results can be fantastic. The procedure will give confidence to the individual and allow them to feel more comfortable with their arms. The effects are generally long lasting providing you follow a balanced diet and exercise regularly.