

Hmmm...Tummy Tuck or Pilates...

By Cheryl Graves

Since Pilates has gained the reputation of getting a woman's abs back in shape, it is often asked (while pointing to a frustrating 'pouch'), "How do I get rid of this?" If you are pondering this question, you must ask yourself, "How did I get the 'pouch' in the first place?" The answer is, it usually comes from two sources—inactivity and pregnancy.

The keys to getting those flat abs back are, yes...diet and exercise. However, the type of exercise you do is even more important. The reason why Pilates is so successful is that it retrains us to focus on breath, stabilizing the core through movement, and using muscles often overshadowed by the stronger, more dominant muscles. Traditional sit-ups focus on the rectus abdominis (six-pack), which is closer to the surface – this is why you can still have that 'pouch' no matter how many crunches you do. By focusing on the overstretched and often overshadowed transverse abdominis

(the inner-most muscle of the belly), the much needed internal girdle (or "spanx") brings the pouch back in. Remember, a 'trained eye' for correction can make a world of difference in your results.

Most women consider the "tummy tuck" after pregnancy because, unless they're blessed with great genetics, exercise alone usually cannot shrink the skin back to the tightness they were used to. Keep in mind two things...

1. It is vital to strengthen the muscles before and after surgery to prevent future back problems. If you have back problems before the tummy tuck, it can make it worse. Remember your stretched-out muscles are cut and

pulled down with your skin which means the nerve connections will be numb for a long time – long enough for you to develop faulty movement patterns and a chronic back problem.

2. Most importantly, you must embrace that surgery is not the final fix to your problem. Establishing the discipline of taking care of you is!

A lot of times when we don't like something, we want to get rid of it ... so, yes, a tummy tuck can give you great results. Just make sure you are ready to love and nurture the part of you that won't get cut off!

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