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SPECIALIST PLASTIC SURGEON
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A PATIENT GUIDE

Arm Lift Surgery

*Brachioplasty — restoring what your body couldn't recover
on its own*

*Many of the people I see about their arms have already achieved something
remarkable. This guide explains what an arm lift involves, and how I think
about it as a surgeon.*

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Aesthetic Breast & Body Surgery | Melbourne's Eastern Suburbs

Many of the people who come to see me about their arms have lost a great deal of weight, through bariatric surgery, years of steady effort, or with the help of the newer weight-loss medications. Others have watched the skin of the upper arm lose its spring with age. What they describe is rarely about appearance alone: arms that feel heavy, skin that becomes sore in the folds, sleeves that won't fit, and the quiet decision, years ago, to stop wearing anything sleeveless.

What is an arm lift?

An arm lift, or brachioplasty, removes loose, excess skin from the upper arms and reshapes what remains, so the arm sits in better proportion with the rest of your body. When skin has been stretched further than it can return from, no amount of exercise will draw it back. That is what an arm lift addresses.

More than the arm

An arm lift is far more than trimming away spare skin, and it is rarely about the arm alone. The upper arm flows into the armpit, the side of the chest, the back and the bra line, and after weight loss the looseness often travels across that whole region. So I look at the upper body as one connected landscape.

Beneath the skin, I treat each tissue in its own way. The fat is shaped, often with liposuction. The deeper tissue is repositioned and secured. The skin is trimmed, rejoined and reshaped so it rests where it belongs.

Understanding what you're living with

Before we talk about surgery, I want to understand what this feels like for you. Is it the heaviness that troubles you most, or the shape? Some people are most affected by the weight and discomfort. Others simply long to wear a short sleeve again without thinking about it.

A question worth sitting with

An arm lift exchanges loose skin for a scar along the arm. If a sleeveless top feels out of reach now, how would you feel wearing one with a fine scar along the inner arm? For many people the answer is a clear yes. For some it isn't, and that is just as important to know.

Is an arm lift right for me?

An arm lift may suit you if:

- loose skin on your upper arms hasn't improved with exercise
- the excess skin causes heaviness, discomfort, rashes or irritation in the folds
- your weight has been stable for some time
- you are in good general health, and you don't smoke or are willing to stop
- you are comfortable with the trade-off of a permanent scar

These are significant operations, and I want you to come to them at your best: settled in your weight, settled in your life, and with good support around you. What will help this go well for you, and what might get in the way? Together, we strengthen the first and reduce the second.

Surgery works best in a body that is cared for. It doesn't replace healthy living. What it can do is help restore what your body couldn't recover on its own.

After weight loss, including with medication

More people are losing a large amount of weight in a shorter time, including with the newer weight-loss medications prescribed by their doctor. When weight comes off quickly, the skin often cannot keep pace.

You are very welcome to come and see me early, while you are still losing weight, so we can plan together. The surgery itself waits until your weight has been stable, usually for around six months, so your result isn't changed by further loss. After major weight loss, an arm lift is often one stage of a wider plan, commonly together with breast surgery, with the lower body treated in another operation.

Arm lift, liposuction, or a mini arm lift?

- **Liposuction alone** can help when the concern is mainly fat and the skin still has good elasticity. Once skin is loose and hanging, liposuction cannot tighten it. Often I use both together.
- **A mini arm lift** places the scar within the armpit. I rarely recommend it. It suits only a small number of people, whose looseness is mild and sits close to the armpit.
- **A full arm lift** is what most people need, and almost everyone after significant weight loss, for a meaningful result.

Throughout the operation I take great care to protect the nerves and lymphatic channels of the arm, to help reduce the risk of long-term swelling and changes in sensation. The right plan is decided together at your consultation.

A word about scars

The scar is permanent. I place it with great care, and I will always show you where it would sit before you decide. A poorly placed scar is more noticeable from every angle and can distort the shape of the arm, so I aim for the sweet spot on the inner arm, between the front and the back, where it is least visible from most angles. It usually runs from the armpit towards the elbow.

Scars take many months to mature. They begin red and firm, then gradually soften and fade, although they always remain visible. My team will guide you through scar care along the way.

“You exchange loose skin for a scar. My role is to make sure it's an exchange you truly want.”

The surgery & your recovery

An arm lift is performed under general anaesthetic, and most patients stay in hospital overnight. I don't use drains for this operation. You'll wear compression garments on your arms while you heal.

I think of surgery like a sandwich: strong and well prepared going in, the operation in the middle, and a return to movement and healthy living afterwards.

First few days	Swelling, bruising and some discomfort, eased with pain relief.
Weeks 1-2	The most restrictive time. Rest with your arms raised, move gently, and avoid lifting.
After 2 weeks	Most people return to light activity, including desk work.
Weeks 4-6	A gradual return to normal activity and exercise, guided at your follow-up.
Physical work	If your work is physical, such as trades or hairdressing, you will need more time away.

Risks & complications

All surgery carries risks. With an arm lift these include bleeding, infection, delayed wound healing, raised or widened scars, asymmetry, fluid collection (seroma), prolonged swelling, and changes in sensation in the arm. There are the general risks of anaesthesia, and the small risk of serious complications such as blood clots. After major weight loss the tissues have been stretched a great deal, so a smaller revision is sometimes needed later. That isn't a failure; it reflects how much a body has been through. We go through your own risks carefully at your consultation.

What does it cost?

Because every arm lift is tailored, there is no single price. Your quote includes the **surgeon's fee, anaesthetist, surgical assistant, hospital costs**, follow-up appointments, compression garments, a scar management program and post-operative nursing support. You'll receive an itemised quote after your consultation.

If you have lost significant weight (equivalent to at least five BMI points), your weight has been stable for at least six months, and the excess skin causes a genuine functional or skin problem, your arm lift may be eligible for Medicare item 30169. This is assessed at your consultation and is never automatic. A valid item number is what allows your private health fund to contribute to hospital costs. A cosmetic arm lift is self-funded.

Taking the next step

At your consultation we'll talk about what has brought you here, I'll examine you, and we'll go through whether an arm lift is right for you, what can realistically be achieved, where the scar would sit, and what recovery involves. There is no obligation to go ahead.

A GP referral is essential for any type of surgery, so please arrange one before your appointment. A consultation fee of **\$300** applies, payable when you book.

To arrange a consultation:

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This guide is general information only and is not personal medical advice. All surgery carries risks and possible complications; results vary from person to person and cannot be guaranteed. This material is intended for people aged 18 and over. Any surgical or invasive procedure carries risks — before proceeding, seek a second opinion from an appropriately qualified health practitioner. © Dr Carmen Munteanu.