

# WHY I HAD A MOMMY makeover

Two women share their stories.

BY STACEY STEIN

## e CONSIDERING SURGERY?

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For many women, pregnancy heralds two major changes: the arrival of a baby and the disappearance of their old body. Once Junior arrives, it becomes sadly obvious to

many women that their once-perky breasts and taut tummies are a thing of the past.

But does it have to be this way? Not for an increasing number of women, who are undergoing "mommy makeover" procedures to reclaim their pre-baby bodies.

"Having a baby is fantastic. The only thing that makes it a drag is if you're unhappy with the way you look," says Dr. Frank Lista, a plastic surgeon with 25 years of experience.

According to Dr. Lista, "mommy makeovers," which consist of two or three procedures done at the same time, were unheard of when he first started out.

These days, Dr. Lista is performing four or five mommy makeovers a week.

Arriving at the decision to go under the knife after having kids isn't an easy one, but women who do it tend to be ecstatic with the results. Read on to find out about the experiences of two women who went through with the procedure.

## CASE STUDY 1

**NAME:** Crystal C.

**PROCEDURES:** Abdominoplasty, breast lift and breast augmentation

For most of her life, Crystal C. had been overweight, but things really spiralled out of control when she became pregnant. Crystal, whose pre-pregnancy size was a 16 to 18, ended up at a size 22 to 24 after giving birth to her daughter.

"It just added insult to injury at that point," says Crystal, who lives in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Her daughter, Sidney, was born in 2000, and Crystal continued to struggle with her weight. Then, just before her daughter's 10th birthday, Crystal decided to take charge of her life.

She overhauled her diet, started exercising five times a week and, two years later, was down to a size eight after shedding a remarkable 130 pounds.

But the massive weight loss left her with what Crystal describes as "copious amounts of skin" in her abdomen area that

no amount of dieting or exercise could eliminate. Crystal was also unhappy with the appearance of her "saggy" breasts. In July 2012, she met with Dr. Frank Lista, who was recommended to her by her trainer.

"My weight had been out of control and I wanted to be there for my child, so I made myself over healthwise," she says, "and that turned into thinking that, as a woman, I deserved to look as good as I feel."

"There was no more I could do via food or the gym."

Dr. Lista recommended that Crystal go through with a mommy makeover procedure, which would remove the excess skin and repair her abdominal muscles while also fixing her breasts through a lift and augmentation, all done in one full swoop.

While Crystal was emotionally ready to go through with cosmetic surgery, the path to arriving at this place of mental certainty wasn't an easy one.

Crystal had always felt judged about being overweight, and then felt judged once she decided to do something about her body. "You go from feeling like you're not good enough being a larger person to maybe you're not a good mother or a good person because now you're being vain and selfish by spending so much time and effort

on changing who you are," Crystal says.

While she's been fortunate to have a supportive family and a supportive circle of friends, she recalls feeling "trapped" inside a body "that didn't match the person that was inside."

Ultimately, after years of hard work overhauling her lifestyle and her body, Crystal says emphatically, "I knew I was doing this because I deserved it."

She underwent surgery in February 2013 and tears up when remembering what she felt like that day. "It was like a kid on Christmas Eve because I knew that I was going to go to sleep and when I woke up it was going to be something really amazing that I never thought would happen," she recalls.

Crystal had a great recovery and, within two to three weeks, the vast majority of her bruising had vanished. She felt completely healed about three to four months post-surgery, and by six months all the swelling was gone.

She describes herself as "absolutely ecstatic" with the results. And it doesn't hurt that she now wears a size four or six.

The positive effects of her mommy makeover have helped transform both her body and her life. Crystal recalls avoiding places like the beach and amusement parks because she was afraid to wear a bathing suit or tank top.

"I stopped living life because of the way I looked," she says.

She feels strongly that moms deserve to have their own time to do things that will make them healthier and happier.

"A mother is the foundation of a family, and if you take care of yourself, the quality of life of those around you is just going to be more enriched," she says.

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## ASK THE DOCTOR

AS TOLD TO STACEY STEIN

Dr. Frank Lista, MD, FRCS(C), Founder and Medical Director of The Plastic Surgery Clinic, Mississauga and Toronto  
theplasticsurgeryclinic.com

### **ELEVATE** What's involved in a mommy makeover?

**DR. LISTA:** It's a little different with everybody, but it almost always includes something for the tummy and something for the breasts. The most common thing we do is a tummy tuck (abdominoplasty), liposuction or both. If we're doing

## BEFORE



breasts, it could be a breast lift, a breast reduction, a breast augmentation or an augmentation with a lift.

### **ELEVATE** What's done during this procedure?

**DR. LISTA:** Your tummy has two muscles that go all the way from your rib cage to your pelvic bone, straight down the front. Normally they're attached at the midline, but if you've had a really big baby or your muscles can't stretch enough, they come apart. And if they don't go back together, you have a gap in between those two muscles and that's why your stomach can't be perfectly flat. What we do in the surgery, if the patient needs it, is we sew those two muscles back together and both excess skin and excess fat are removed.

### **ELEVATE** What incisions are made?

**DR. LISTA:** With a tummy tuck you end up with a bikini line incision, so it looks like a Caesarean scar, except a little bit longer. If you already have a Caesarean scar, then we'll just use the same scar. Often there's a little scar around the belly button as well.

### **ELEVATE** How long is the procedure?

**DR. LISTA:** The whole thing takes around three and a half hours, and those patients almost always go home the same day.

### **ELEVATE** What is recovery like?

**DR. LISTA:** Our patients feel pretty good because we use this device called a pain relief pump. It looks like a little box and there's a little pump inside filled with long-acting local anaesthetic—it runs all night long, automatically circulating anaesthetic solution all around the area. It's not a narcotic, so it doesn't make you sleepy. Because of this, patients feel good and don't have to take as much pain medicine. Most people are back to work in two or three weeks.

### **ELEVATE** What's the advantage of having several procedures done at the same time with a mommy makeover?

## AFTER



**DR. LISTA:** There are a bunch of advantages. First of all, it's one anaesthetic. Because it's one anaesthetic, there are some cost savings to us and we pass that on to the patient. Also, the time it takes to do the procedures together is shorter than the time it takes to do them separately. If you do the procedures together, it's just three weeks (instead of three weeks for the tummy and then another three weeks for the breasts), so it cuts your recovery time in half.

### **ELEVATE** What's the average cost of a mommy makeover?

**DR. LISTA:** Generally you're looking at somewhere between \$12,000 and \$18,000, depending on what is done. At the highest amount, that would mean a tummy tuck, liposuction, a breast lift and implants.

### **ELEVATE** Who should have a mommy makeover? Who are the best candidates for this?

**DR. LISTA:** Women who were happy with their look before and feel that most of their changes have come about because of pregnancy. Women who are healthy, generally fit and pretty close to their ideal body weight.

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## CASE STUDY 2

**NAME:** Kim Nelson

**PROCEDURES:** Abdominoplasty, breast lift and breast augmentation

After the birth of her fourth child, Kim Nelson did all that she could to get into shape, but she knew that "things weren't going to go back to where they were."

That's when she started thinking about doing something about the stretched skin and deflated breasts she was left with after multiple pregnancies.



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But although she had the full support of her husband, making the decision to have a mommy makeover wasn't easy.

She acknowledges she felt guilty about the cost and worried about potential complications. "I had thought about it for a few years before I actually went ahead and did it," says Nelson, 39, who lives in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan.

Then a friend had a mommy makeover and Nelson saw firsthand what the procedure and recovery were like, and she decided to go for it.

In August 2011, Nelson had a tummy tuck, breast lift and breast augmentation all done at the same time.

Now boasting a flat tummy and fuller breasts that no longer sag, Nelson says she feels more confident about her body. A mom to three teenage daughters, Nelson was careful to explain to her children her reasons for going through with cosmetic surgery.

"I told them this was something I did after having four children and I explained what that does to your body," she says, adding that, although she's naturally become more confident with age, having a mommy makeover has made her happier about herself.

Nelson had the procedures done by Dr. Feng Chong in Edmonton, Alberta. Dr. Chong was the second plastic surgeon she met with, and he immediately impressed her.

"He has a wonderful bedside manner, and he's very upfront about what's realistic and what's not," she says.

After the operation, Nelson had a terrific recovery. She was out of commission the week after surgery, but by the second week she was able to drive her kids around. Two months after the operation, she was back to her boot camp class.

She compares the pain as being similar to what she experienced after having a Caesarean section.

A few months later, the swelling went down and she was fully healed. She describes the results as "excellent."

"I look in the mirror and I'm very happy. I wouldn't think twice about doing it again," she says.

For moms contemplating a mommy makeover, Nelson says it's important to have realistic expectations. Your body changes as you get older and after you have children, and you're never going to look the way you did when you were 18. It's about "being the best that you can possibly look," she says.

She recommends the procedure to moms who feel self-conscious about their bodies and can make the financial commitment to having plastic surgery.

"For myself, it was kind of a reward after having babies and wanting to do something for a long time," she says.

## ASK THE DOCTOR

AS TOLD TO STACEY STEIN

**Dr. Feng Chong, BSc, MD, FRCS(C)**  
Edmonton, Alberta, [plasticsurgeryalberta.ca](http://plasticsurgeryalberta.ca)

**ELEVATE** What concerns did Kim have when she visited you for an initial consultation?

**DR. CHONG:** She was unhappy with the drooping and sagging in her breasts, as well as the decreased size, volume and fullness in the upper part of her breasts. She also did not like the loose skin in her abdomen.

**ELEVATE** Why was Kim a good candidate for a mommy makeover procedure?

**DR. CHONG:** She was a healthy mom, she was finished having kids, and she had no other medical issues. She exercised, ate healthy and was at a healthy weight. As well, she is a non-smoker. She also had a good attitude, with realistic expectations.

**ELEVATE** What incisions were made?

**DR. CHONG:** We used an anchor-type incision for her breasts—also described as an upside-down T-incision. There is a faint incision around the areola, one up and down and one in the fold of the breast. Her tummy tuck incision is in the groin area and is hidden in the bikini line.

**ELEVATE** What was Kim's recovery like?

**DR. CHONG:** She did very well. There were no major issues and, from what I recall, she was surprised that it wasn't as bad as she thought it would be.

**ELEVATE** What's the cost of the mommy makeover?

**DR. CHONG:** The more you have done, the more it will cost. But for most people, it's in the low \$10,000 to mid-high \$10,000 range—around there.

**ELEVATE** How do most patients respond to the procedure?

**DR. CHONG:** They're off work for about two weeks, but during that time we encourage them to walk and do simple things. They can't do heavy lifting or exercise for eight weeks. For the final result, it's usually six to 12 months, and the main aspect of that is the scar. When you give it time, it fades to the point where we're happy with it.

**ELEVATE** What's the feedback that you generally get from patients who have undergone a mommy makeover?

**DR. CHONG:** We don't get anyone who comes in and says they regret it, so everyone is happy. The one thing that is resounding with a lot of patients is they say they wish they had done it earlier. I get that all the time.

**ELEVATE** What's the impact that this procedure tends to have on patients, both mentally and on their lives?

**DR. CHONG:** Not only do they physically look better and feel better about themselves, but it also affects their confidence and self-esteem. We never push surgery on anyone, but for some women it's life-changing. I also hear from women that it helps them when it comes to physical activity because their core muscles are tightened. ☺

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