



Dr Wei-Han Chen Plastic Surgery Inc.

Ground floor Suite 3, Netcare Rosebank Hospital
11 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, 2132
Website: www.whcplasticsurgery.co.za
Tel: +27 11 328 0500
Email: weihanchen@whcplasticsurgery.co.za

Arm Reduction (Brachioplasty)

An arm reduction, also known as a brachioplasty, is a surgical procedure performed to remove excess skin and fat from the upper arms. The procedure is designed to improve the contour of the arms and reduce the appearance of loose, sagging, or “flabby” skin that may develop as a result of ageing, weight loss, or loss of skin elasticity.

Arm reduction surgery can dramatically improve the shape and appearance of the upper arms; however, it is important to understand that the procedure results in a permanent scar. Depending on the amount of excess skin present and the extent of correction required, the scar may extend from the armpit down toward the elbow. Every effort is made to position scars as discreetly as possible, but they cannot be completely avoided.

In patients who have only small to moderate deposits of excess fat and good skin tone, liposuction alone may be sufficient. In these cases, removal of skin may not be necessary. During your consultation, your surgeon will assess your skin quality and discuss whether liposuction alone or a formal arm reduction procedure is most appropriate for you.

The best candidates for arm reduction surgery are men and women who are generally healthy but are troubled by excess skin or localized fat deposits of the upper arms that do not respond to diet or exercise. Patients who have experienced significant weight loss or age-related loss of skin elasticity may also benefit from the procedure. Patients planning further major weight loss are usually advised to postpone surgery until their weight has stabilised.

An arm reduction can improve body contour and self-confidence, but it is important to have realistic expectations. The procedure will improve the appearance of the arms, but it will not necessarily achieve perfection or change other aspects of your life. A detailed consultation is important to discuss your goals, expected outcomes, and the trade-offs involved, particularly the presence of permanent scars.

Thousands of arm reduction procedures are performed successfully each year, and when performed by a qualified plastic surgeon experienced in body contouring procedures, results are generally very positive. Careful adherence to your surgeon’s instructions before and after surgery is essential in reducing the risk of complications and optimising healing.

The procedure is usually performed under general anaesthesia and typically takes between one and two hours, depending on the extent of surgery required. During the procedure, an incision is made along the inner aspect of the upper arm, commonly extending from the armpit toward the elbow. Excess skin and fat are carefully removed, and the remaining skin is tightened and repositioned to improve the contour of the arm. The incisions are then closed with sutures, dressings are applied, and in some cases a temporary drain may be inserted to remove excess fluid during the early stages of healing.

Following surgery, swelling, bruising, tightness, and discomfort are common during the initial recovery period. Pain and discomfort are usually manageable with prescribed medication. Depending on the extent of surgery, patients may either return home the same day or remain in hospital overnight for observation.

Your scars may initially appear firm, raised, or more noticeable during the first three to six months of healing. This is a normal part of the scar maturation process. Scar taping or scar management is typically recommended for approximately three months after surgery to help optimise scar quality. It may take nine months to one year for scars to soften, flatten, and lighten in colour. There is a risk of hypertrophic or thickened scarring following this procedure, particularly in patients prone to abnormal scar formation.

Arm reduction surgery generally produces excellent and long-lasting results for patients with loose and excess upper arm skin. Maintaining a stable weight, healthy diet, and regular exercise routine will help preserve the results over time.

As with all surgical procedures, arm reduction surgery carries potential risks and complications. These may include bleeding, infection, delayed wound healing, asymmetry, numbness, fluid collections, widening of scars, hypertrophic scarring, and the possible need for additional surgery. Your surgeon will discuss these risks and your expected recovery in detail during your consultation.