



ABSOLUTE
COSMETIC MEDICINE

BREAST AUGMENTATION

Breast augmentation is one of the most frequently performed cosmetic surgery procedures today. Women all over the world have thought about breast augmentation, the aesthetic and emotional aspects of breast surgery and what the first steps are in undergoing breast augmentation. The main reasons for undergoing breast augmentation are: to increase breast size and/or shape (cosmetic); replacement of an existing implant for medical or cosmetic reasons; correction of a con-genital deformity.

Our aim is for a natural shaped breast, not just general enlarging. It must be remembered that although breast augmentation is a common procedure, it may not suit some individuals and results can vary.

Breast augmentation has undergone many variations in procedure and methods since the initial surgery in 1962. There has been constant improvement both in manufacturing processes and surgical techniques. To date over 750,000 breast implants have been inserted worldwide. The surgeon/patient relationship has also evolved with patients becoming increasingly well informed on all aspects of breast surgery.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BREASTS

Your breast is made up of fatty tissue, glandular tissue, milk ducts, blood vessels, nerves and lymph ducts, covered with skin. Behind the breast lies the pectoralis major muscle. A breast implant can be placed either partially under or over this muscle, depending on the thickness of your breast tissue and its ability to adequately cover the breast implant. It is the fatty tissue that makes your breast feel soft and gives it its shape. The shape also depends on the elasticity of the skin.

WHAT IS A BREAST IMPLANT?

A breast implant consists of an envelope that is usually filled with gel. Gels can have different consistencies, one of which is achieved by the use of cohesive gel which has a shape retaining memory. Implants can also be filled with saline solution or silicone gel.

These fillers can help to create the appearance you desire. As well as the filler, there are other features of breast implant that will assist with the finish you wish for such as the shell, height, shape and size.

Breast implants exist in two different shapes. Some implants are round (round implants), while others are shaped more like a teardrop (anatomical implants), closely resembling the natural shape of a breast. Opinion differs as to the best to use and the technique is always evolving.

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SILICONE VERSUS SALINE

Silicone was the first type of implant used and first approved for medical use as it caused very little reaction in the tissue. It is also widely used in the pharmaceutical and food industries, and in many medical devices such as pacemakers, heart valves, suture materials, lubricants, coatings for hypodermic needles, syringes and blood bags. Silicones are even found in puddings, cake mixes, soft drinks, lipsticks, body lotions, hair sprays, bedding, clothing, tissues and baby care products.

In addition to its proven safety, the consistency of silicone provides for a very natural feel to the breast. Silicone is also available in a cohesive form similar to jelly in consistency. If gel leaks out, it produces stickiness around the implant but is usually contained by connective tissue that forms around foreign matter and prevents the gel from seeping into the surrounding tissues. This may stimulate tissue to react with capsular contracture but there is no other induction that this is dangerous.

Silicone implants have less risk of ridges. They are stable and designed to give a more natural anatomical form than other implants. Some implants have both a cohesive silicone gel and soft touch cohesive gel. The vast range of shapes and sizes allows the implants to be customised to the patient's desire, breast and thoracic shapes.

The vast range of shapes and sizes allows the patient to select the implants that will give the best results.

Saline implants have the advantage of having a material inside the implant that is not foreign to the body as people consist of about two-thirds of salt water. If the casing of the implant should develop a small leak, the salt water is absorbed by the body but the risk of this is less than 5% over a ten-year period. If the implant should leak, it can result in the breast becoming flat and another operation is needed to insert a new implant. Saline implants also have a lower tendency to develop capsular contracture. A disadvantage to saline is the 'slushy' consistency. This allows for it to be used in round implants, leaving you with only one choice of shape.

FACTORS LIMITING YOUR SELECTION AND SIZE

The implant size you desire may be limited by your existing breast tissue characteristics. For example, the elasticity of your skin or the amount of existing breast tissue you have may keep you from increasing your breast size as much as you might like.

The skin needs to be sufficiently elastic to be able to cover the desired implant correctly. Implants that are too large for the quantity of skin and breast tissue available may remain visible or palpable below the skin.

This may spoil the effect that you want to achieve. Furthermore, you may face a greater risk of surgical complications. Your practitioner will explain any limitations during your consultation.



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HOW LONG DO BREAST IMPLANTS LAST FOR?

Breast implants are artificial devices which will gradually age and wear out, and will eventually need to be removed or replaced. This should be considered after ten to twenty years, which is when the risk of problems may increase. How long the breast implant remains without complications, depends on the type of implant inserted and the type of surgery you have had.

It is important to remember that a breast implant, whatever it is filled with, is not necessarily in place for life and to remember removal or replacement may be necessary. This can add expense in the future along with the cost of any problems encountered.

There are women who have the same breast implants in place for over thirty years without problems, but there are also women who have to have their implants replaced within a relatively short period of time. For these reasons, you should be aware that you may need to undergo surgery on your breasts again for some reason, directly related to your breast implants.

PREPARING FOR THE OPERATION

Your surgeon will begin by making sure that you are in good health, well informed and have realistic expectations of the result, as well as the risks and the post-operative instructions. All aspects of the surgery should be fully understood by the patient before the procedure date is booked. It is also important for the surgeon to understand your size requirements. A decision also needs to be made on the positioning of the implant. It can be placed either partially or totally under the pectoralis major muscle (sub muscular) or on top of the muscle and under the glands (sub glandular). The surgeon, in consultation with you, will choose the location depending on your physical characteristics.

The most important part of the "pre-surgery workup" is ensuring you are psychologically prepared, realistic and fully informed. Having breast augmentation will not change your life; some patients may not like the shape, or the size may not match their expectations. For this reason, you **MUST** be realistic and well informed.

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OPERATION DAY

Before the operation, breast measurements are retaken using a calliper and measuring tape. The surgeon then makes his markings on the chest while you are in the sitting position. The area to be operated on is washed with alcohol to sterilise it and then covered with sterile surgical drapes. An incision is then made to create the pocket for the implant. It is at this stage; the implant is put in place. The incision is then sewn together in several layers. Re-absorbable thread is used in the muscles and in the lower layer of the skin. The surface suture area is usually made with nylon threads, which are removed after about two weeks. You are then bandaged. The operation normally takes one to two hours.



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WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE SURGERY

Breast augmentation operations are usually painful in the hours after surgery but the pain should ease by the following day and you will be sent home with effective painkillers.

Immediately after the operation, your breasts may feel numb and swollen but this will improve week by week. Within a week of the operation, the pain has usually disappeared, though the breast may still be tender to touch. Exercise can be resumed with the caution after a couple of weeks and increased at a comfortable pace, but avoid intense physical activity and lifting is to be avoided for six weeks.

The final result of a breast enlargement operation is assessed at a follow-up appointment. When living with breast implants, all women should practice breast self-examination and have annual clinical examinations by their Doctor making sure the Doctor is aware of the presence of implants.

This is a procedure that is commonly performed but often misunderstood by the general public.

Complications can occur and the "contracture of the capsule" and "double bubble under the breast" must be discussed with your practitioner.

Information courtesy of Inamed