

Breast Augmentation

Fact Sheet

What reasons prompt women to consider breast implant surgery?

Many women simply want larger breasts, many having considered breast implants for years before coming in to the doctor's office to discuss the procedure. Other women want implants to correct asymmetry or to restore volume lost after pregnancy. There is no one right shape or size that a breast "should" be. But if a woman wishes to change the way her breasts look, implants are often the solution.

What types of implants are available?

Saline and silicone implants are both available. There are advantages and disadvantages with each one, so the decision is highly individualized. Whether saline or silicone, implants come in different shapes and shell types. The implants can be round or teardrop shaped, smooth or rough surfaced, more projection or less projection, and of course a variety of sizes. While a full discussion of these options is beyond the scope of FAQs, the pros and cons should be discussed with your physician at your consultation.



How is the size of the implant determined?

Basically, the patient chooses the size of the implant. We keep a variety of sizers in the office and have patients try them out before surgery. We try to find out what seems right. It is not an exact science, of course. The implant in the body is different than an implant placed in the bra, but the use of sample sizers helps assure that the result is pretty close to the desired size.

Do implants last for life?

No. Any prosthetic device that is placed in the body has a limited "lifespan". Breast implants are no different. While we expect implants to last decades, the woman with implants should expect to need some additional surgery at some point in her life. Usually surgery is done to replace a broken or deflated implant, although sometimes excess scarring or shifting of the implant prompt revision surgery. Some women want to change the size of their implants and have surgery for that reason. (Most women opt for larger implants if they change size.)

Can I still have mammograms?

Absolutely. Women with implants should have regular cancer screening just like women without implants. The mammogram will have to include an additional angle to visualize as much breast tissue possible, so women should be sure to tell the technician that she has implants at the time of mammography.



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toll free: 866.594.5476

info@rejuvenate-medspa.com

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Will a mammogram rupture my implants?

This is a very difficult question to answer. In general the answer is no. While there are certainly women who have had the experience of a mammogram one day and broken implant the next, we believe that an implant that breaks during a normal mammogram is one that was weakened and would have broken later. Given the risk of breast cancer for women overall and the seriousness of that disease, women should never stop having cancer screening because of her implants. There are also other ways to screen for cancer, such as MRI, and this can be discussed with one's physician if necessary.

Where is the surgery performed?

The procedure is performed in a surgical facility on an out patient basis. In most cases the surgery is done with local anesthetic and IV sedation administered by a board certified anesthesiologist. For most women this facilitates a relatively comfortable surgical experience with quick recovery afterwards. General anesthesia is available in certain cases.

How long does the surgery take?

Surgery takes approximately an hour and a half, although each case is different. There is time prior to surgery to get ready and set up for the procedure and time afterwards to recover and get ready to go home, so the total amount of time in the facility is more than just the surgery time itself.

Do I need to buy a special bra before my operation?

No, a bra is provided at the time of surgery. We put it on as you are becoming more alert following the procedure. We do recommend getting a sports-type bra to have as a back-up at home. Since it can be difficult to predict the size of the bra, many women opt to get a second bra after the procedure. You will be advised not to wear underwire for six weeks after the procedure. It is important to have a few bras that you feel comfortable wearing during that time.

How much pain should I expect afterwards?

Of course, each woman is different. Most women describe the post operative pain as similar to the feeling of milk "let down" when one can't nurse. A feeling of tightness and stretching is common, more so with larger implants. Probably the most important variable is the woman herself. Women who expect that there will be some pain, that it will be manageable, and aren't fearful of the pain do much better than women who may have unrealistic expectations about surgery being pain-free.

When can I shower after surgery?

One may shower the morning after surgery. There are no restrictions about lifting arms above the head – a woman may reach and move as much as she is comfortable.



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When can I return to work?

In general, women return to work within a week or so following surgery. If the implants are placed under the muscle the recovery tends to be a bit longer because the muscle heals more slowly than the skin. Women who have very physical jobs may need to take more time away from work. Of course, each person's recovery is different and some women may take a bit more time before they feel ready to return to their jobs.

What are the most common risks of implant surgery?

The most common surgical risks are bleeding and infection. Limitations of implant surgery include the ability to feel the implant, the possibility of numbness or extra sensitivity to the nipples, having bad scarring that causes the implants to feel very hard, rippling or waviness on the surface of the implant, asymmetry, and dissatisfaction with the size. Fortunately serious complications are rare. More long term risks include shifting of the implant and implant breakage.



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