

Breast Reduction

Fact Sheet

What reasons prompt women to consider breast reduction surgery?

The back pain associated with excessively large breasts is usually what prompts the decision to have breast reduction surgery. Women with excessively large breasts also often have shoulder pain, painful ruts from bra straps, neck pain, tension headaches, and rashes in the crease underneath the breast. These women often have difficulty finding clothing that fits. There are also personal and social issues, especially for younger women, that can be a real problem with a large breasted appearance.

Is breast reduction considered cosmetic surgery?

Breast reduction is a medical procedure rather than cosmetic surgery. Although the surgery does result in an aesthetically pleasing look, it is performed to reduce pain. The surgery is designed to improve or eliminate the back pain, shoulder pain, neck pain, and rashes from the excess breast weight. Most women find that they can stand up straight and have little or no back pain following the procedure. They can often engage in activities that the size and weight of their breasts used to prevent them from doing.

Are most patients pleased with the surgical result?

Women who have had breast reductions have the highest patient satisfaction of any breast surgery. A common feeling expressed afterward is "I wish I had done this years ago".

Is there an age limit for breast reduction surgery?

Except in severe cases, breast reduction surgery is not performed on young women whose breasts may not have finished growing. Older women in good health can have the surgery at virtually any age.

Do I need a mammogram before surgery?

Regular screening mammograms should be performed just as they would on a woman who was not considering breast reduction surgery. Women 40 years of age and older should have a mammogram within a reasonable time prior to surgery. Afterwards it is recommended that annual screenings resume approximately 9-12 months following the procedure.

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 also available and used for some patients.

How long does the surgery take?

Surgery takes approximately two hours, although it can be longer or shorter depending on the size of the breasts prior to surgery. 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.



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Will I have drainage tubes?

Drainage tubes are not used with breast reduction surgery.

Are there staples or sutures that have to be removed?

No. Dr. Mackenzie uses dissolving sutures with this procedure.

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. Itching or occasional sharp pains may occur as healing progresses. 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 about five days after surgery. There are no restrictions about lifting arms above the head — a woman may reach and move as much as she is comfortable.

When can I return to work?

In general, women return to work within a week or two following surgery. Women who have very physical jobs may need to take more time away from work. The major thing to avoid is any activity that may result in contact to the breasts (childcare can be difficult with young children in the early phases of healing) and activities that involve bounce or jiggle of the breasts. 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 breast reduction surgery?

The most common surgical risks are bleeding and infection. Limitations of reduction surgery include asymmetry, the possibility of numbness or extra sensitivity to the nipples, very prominent scars, delayed healing, and dissatisfaction with the size. Fortunately serious complications are rare.



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