

Having a Breast Reduction

Patient Information

This section provides some information about having a breast reduction operation. The treatment described here may be adapted to meet your individual medical needs, so it is important to follow your surgeon's advice.

Please raise any concerns or questions with your surgeon or nurse. It is natural to feel anxious before hospital treatment, but knowing what to expect can help.

We care for patients from a wide range of surgical specialties from pre-assessment through to discharge. Our team of nurses, healthcare assistants and therapists work together, ensuring that you receive a high standard of care throughout your stay. We adopt a partnership approach that aids you to quickly recover from your operation and enables you to return home as quickly as possible.

What is a breast reduction?

A breast reduction (or reduction mammoplasty) is an operation to reduce the size of your breasts by removing some of the excess fat and skin.

This surgery can relieve the discomfort caused by large breasts, including back and neck pain, grooves in the shoulders from bra straps and rashes under the breasts. Many women feel happier and less self-conscious about the way they look after the operation.

A breast reduction operation is performed under general anaesthesia, which means you will be asleep during the procedure. For more information about general anaesthesia, please see the separate Cosmetic Surgery at Scunthorpe and Goole Hospitals patient information leaflet, What to expect when attending Goole District Hospital.

You will need to stay in hospital for at least one night after your operation.

Your surgeon will explain the benefits and risks of having your breasts reduced, and will also discuss the alternatives to the procedure.

Preparing for your operation

The hospital will normally ask you to attend for a pre-assessment appointment at least two days prior to your surgery date, where the usual pre-surgery tests will be conducted.

If you normally take medication (eg tablets for blood pressure), continue to take this as usual, unless your surgeon or anaesthetist specifically tells you not to. If you are unsure about taking your medication, please contact the number stated

Before you come into hospital, you will be asked to follow some instructions:

- Bring in a soft, supportive bra to wear home after your operation. You will be given information about the most suitable kind of bra before coming in.
- Have a bath or shower at home on the day of your admission.
- Remove any make-up, nail varnish and jewellery. Rings and earrings that you would prefer not to remove can usually be covered with sticky tape.
- Follow the fasting instructions given at your pre-assessment appointment. Typically, you must not eat or drink for about six hours before general anaesthesia. However some anaesthetists

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When you arrive at the hospital, a nurse will explain to you how you will be cared for during your stay, and may do some simple tests such as measuring your heart rate and blood pressure, and testing your urine.

Your surgeon and anaesthetist will also visit you to discuss the operation. Your breasts will be marked with a pen to show the size and shape you have agreed with your surgeon. This is a good time to ask any unanswered questions.

Your nurse will then help you prepare for theatre. You may be asked to wear compression stockings to prevent blood clots forming in the veins of your legs (deep vein thrombosis – DVT).

About the operation

There are various ways to do this operation. Your surgeon will discuss which is the most appropriate for you and explain how your breasts will look afterwards.

Typically, the excess breast tissue is removed through incisions on the lower part of the breasts and the nipples are moved to suit the new shape. The skin is shaped and the cuts are closed with stitches and covered with a dressing.

The operation takes two hours or more.

Back in your room

You will need to rest until the effects of the general anaesthesia have passed. You may have tubes coming out of small holes in the skin near your breasts. These drain any fluid into a bag or a bottle. The tubes are usually removed after a day or two.

There will be a drip in your arm to keep you hydrated. This will be removed when you can drink enough fluids.

Your surgeon will visit you to assess your progress and answer any questions you may have about the operation.

Before you go home, a nurse will give you advice about caring for the healing wounds.

Breast Lift

What is 'breast lift' surgery?

Breast lift surgery or 'mastopexy' is the name given to the procedure which lifts and firms the breasts. The aim is a fuller, tighter bust which will enhance the patient's appearance. It does NOT increase the size of the breasts.

The breasts start to lose tone and elasticity as a result of the ageing process. Pregnancy and childbirth can also result in stretched skin and drooping breasts.

Lifting the breasts means a return to a more youthful and shapely appearance. However, this is not a permanent affect as the ageing process can not be held off for ever. So, you may need to repeat this surgery at a later date.

There are several techniques for breast lift surgery which are based upon different types of incisions. These range from the most popular 'anchor' shaped incision through to the 'doughnut' shaped incision. Some women will require more extensive incisions whereas others will be suitable for smaller, less extensive incisions.

This procedure usually takes around two to two and a half hours and is performed under a general anaesthetic. You will experience some bruising and slight swelling afterwards but this will ease. You will be prescribed painkillers to control any discomfort.

Preparation

If you are taking any 'over the counter' medicines such as evening primrose oil then stop taking this as it can interfere with wound healing. If you are taking any prescription medicines then you may have to stop taking these before surgery and wait for a period afterwards before resuming them. The reason for this? There is the risk of these interacting badly with any medication given during your surgery. In both cases, check with the surgeon as to what you can and cannot take. It is better to be safe than sorry.

What you will also have to think about is what will happen when you are back home following surgery. For the first few days you will be tired and your breasts will be sore, bruised and possibly swollen. You will not be up to doing any of your everyday tasks and will have to allow plenty of time to recover. The surgeon will have advised you about this and how much time you need to allow for the recovery. If he advises you to take a week off work then arrange this well in advance with your employer.

So, make sure that anything important is done before surgery or can be put off until you are well again. Make sure that you do any food shopping before your surgery and buy in extra to cover those days when you are resting.

The Procedure

This procedure is usually carried out under a general anaesthetic and if combined with breast implants, will take around two to two and a half hours to complete. This means an overnight stay in hospital.

There are several techniques used in breast uplift but the most common involves making 3 separate incisions. The first is made around the nipple, the second is a vertical incision from the bottom edge of the nipple to the crease underneath the breast and the third is made in a horizontal fashion and follows the natural contour of the breast.

The surgeon will then trim any excess breast skin and move the areola and nipple to a higher position. He or she will then take hold of the skin above the areola and bring this down and around it. This will lift and tighten the breast.

The difference with this procedure is that both the nipples and areolas remain attached to the skin and tissue which means there will be no loss of sensation. This is important to those women who are looking to start a family and breastfeed.

After the operation

You will be advised to wear a special support bra at this time and to wear it at all times. This means 24/7 as per the surgeon's advice.

You will not be fit enough to drive home after your surgery as anaesthesia can make you feel groggy and out of sorts. Arrange for someone to drive you home.

When you go for your first aftercare visit, the light dressing will be removed and the wounds cleaned. It is important that these are kept clean so do not have a shower for the first few days following your surgery. Once you are able to do then try to avoid completely submerging your wounds. You can use moisturiser but don't use on the surgical wounds.

Your breasts will feel tender and sore and there may be some minor loss of fluid. This is entirely normal but if it is accompanied by severe pain and/or bleeding then contact your GP or the hospital right away.

After a few days you will be able to walk around and resume some of your normal activities but only do the easy ones to start with. Avoid any strenuous exercise for a week to ten days.

If you take regular exercise then you will find that your stamina is not quite as good as usual. This will return but in the meantime stick to light walking and swimming until it builds up again.

You should be able to return to work after a week.

You will find that it will be 6 weeks or so before you have fully recovered. Your recovery period will include a series of follow up visits in order to check on your progress.

Breast Augmentation

What is 'breast augmentation' surgery?

Having breast implant surgery usually involves either enlarging your breasts or changing their shape. In the UK, breast implant surgery is the most common cosmetic procedure to be carried out on women. It is also known as breast augmentation or mammoplasty.

You may have a number of reasons for wanting breast implants. Many women are simply unhappy about the size or shape of their breasts. Your breasts may be uneven in size, or have changed in appearance, perhaps as a result of having children.

The majority of breast implants are performed to make the breasts larger. However, implants can also be used to make drooping breasts firmer, and to even out unequally sized or unevenly shaped breasts.

Synthetic implants

In the UK, there are currently two types of synthetic implant available - silicone gel and saline. Both types of synthetic implant are surrounded by a firm elastic shell, which helps to prevent the implant from rupturing. The surface of this shell may either be smooth, or textured.

Silicone gel implants

Silicone gel implants are filled with a silicone substance which can either be a solid, jelly-like gel, or a more fluid-like gel. They are pre-filled before being inserted into your breasts.

Advantages of silicone gel implants include:

- they have a long history of safe use,
- they are less likely to wrinkle than other implants, and
- silicone gel is the softest implant filler available, which means that it gives you a very natural feel.

Saline implants

Saline implants are filled with a sterile salt and water solution. They are either pre-filled, or they are filled through a valve once they have been inserted into your breast.

Advantages of saline implants include:

- they have a long history of use, and
- the saline solution can be safely absorbed and excreted (got rid of) by the body if the implant ruptures.

Preparation

What you will also have to think about is what will happen when you are back home following surgery. For the first few days you will be tired and your breasts will be sore, bruised and possibly swollen. You will not be up to doing any of your everyday tasks and will have to allow plenty of time to recover. The surgeon will have advised you about this and how much time you need to allow for the recovery. If he advises you to take a week off work then arrange this well in advance with your employer.

So, make sure that anything important is done before surgery or can be put off until you are well again. Make sure that you do any food shopping before your surgery and buy in extra to cover those days when you are resting.

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The Procedure

Your breast implant operation will usually be carried out while you are under general anaesthetic. Sometimes, the procedure is carried out as day surgery (you will be able to go home the same day). However, you will usually need to stay in hospital overnight. The operation itself will normally take between 1-2 hours.

Discuss your expectations

It is important that you discuss your expectations with your surgeon before you make your final decision to have breast implants.

Some women may have unrealistic expectations about what the surgery will achieve, and may be disappointed with the results. The appearance of implants can vary greatly from person to person, and will depend on your individual circumstances.

The results of your implants will depend on:

- your existing breasts,
- the position of your nipples,
- your age,
- your skin texture,
- your ability to heal, and
- your overall health.

Most women are pleased with the appearance of their breasts following surgery. Having accurate expectations and making an informed decision will help to ensure that you are happy following your operation.

Types of incision

The first stage of the surgery is to make an incision (cut) in either one of three places.

The position of your incision will again be something that your surgeon discusses with you prior to your operation. It will depend on the shape and size of your existing breasts, and where you would like your scars to be.

The different types of incision that you may have are listed below.

- Inframammary - this is the most common type of incision. A small cut is made in the fold underneath each breast.
- Periareolar - this incision is made around the nipple and usually causes minimal scarring. However, you may be more at risk of your nipple sensation being affected.
- Axillary - this incision is made in your armpit area. It may result in more obvious scarring than the other types of incision.

Fitting the implants

Once the incision has been made, the implants can be fitted. An implant can either be positioned between your breast tissue and your chest muscle (subglandular), or behind your chest muscle (submuscular).

Your surgeon will advise you about what position is best for your individual circumstances. Once the implants are in place, the incisions can be sealed using stitches. They will then usually be covered with a

Breast Surgery

Your surgeon will advise you about what position is best for your individual circumstances. Once the implants are in place, the incisions can be sealed using stitches. They will then usually be covered with a dressing.

After your surgery, you may have some fine plastic tubes coming from your breasts. These help drain away any excess fluid, and may have to be left in for up to 48 hours.

After your surgery

You may be worried that your implants look unnatural following your surgery. This is normal and your breasts are likely to feel quite taut, or rigid, at first. However, within a few months, they will start to appear more natural as the breast tissue, muscle, and skin stretches to accommodate the new implants. You may also experience changes in feeling in your breasts, with different areas becoming more, or less, sensitive than they used to be. Although most of these sensation changes are temporary, some may be permanent and this is not unusual.

Going home

Following your operation, you may either be allowed home the same day, or you may require an overnight stay in the hospital, or clinic. Once you are allowed home, you will need to rest to give your body time to recover. Avoid using your arms or chest area excessively following your operation because doing so may cause irritation and bleeding.

Following your operation you should avoid:

- getting your wounds wet for one week,
- sleeping face down for one month,
- heavy lifting for 3-4 weeks, and
- driving for at least one week, or until you can perform an emergency stop without discomfort.

Some surgeons may also recommend that you wear a tight fitting support bra for between 2-6 weeks following your operation.

Depending on your job, you will usually be able to return to work between 2-4 weeks after your breast implants are fitted.

Breast feeding

If you have had breast implants, it will not stop you from breast feeding. However, you may produce slightly less milk than if you had no implants. Your child will not experience any side effects if you breast feed and have implants.

Travelling

You may have heard that it is not safe to fly if you have breast implants. This is not true. The risk of your implant rupturing is not increased because the implant will not be put under any extra strain.