Breast Augmentation

Breast augmentation is surgery done to enlarge the breasts. The shape and size of the breasts can be changed. The shell of the implants is made of a silicone-based material. The inside of the implants contain either saline or silicone gel. Implants are available in different shapes and sizes.

Breast augmentation is also called augmentation mammoplasty. It is considered cosmetic surgery (*aesthetic surgery*) because it is done to change the appearance of the body, not for a medical need.

BEFORE THE SURGERY

Discuss the details of your breast augmentation with your cosmetic surgeon. Talk about:

- What you want out of the surgery. How do you want your breasts to look and feel? What size do you want them to be?
- Whether you should have gel or saline implants. You should know:
  - The type of implant affects how the breast feels.
  - Gel implants should be checked every so often. That is because a leak often produces no symptoms.
  - Age makes a difference. In the United States, saline implants can be used for augmentation in women 18 and older. Gel implants can be used for augmentation in women 22 and older.
- Your surgeon may want you to have a mammogram (*breast X-ray*) and blood tests before the surgery.
- Two weeks before your surgery, stop using aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for pain relief. This includes prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs. Also, stop taking vitamin E.
- If you take blood thinners, ask your caregiver when you should stop taking them.
- Do not eat or drink for about 8 hours before your surgery.
- Arrive at least 1 hour before the surgery, or whenever your surgeon recommends. This will give you time to check-in and fill out any needed paperwork.
- Make arrangements for someone to drive you home after your surgery.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Allergies.
- Medications you take, including herbs, eye drops, over-the-counter medicines, and creams.
- Blood thinners (*anticoagulants*), aspirin, or other drugs that could affect blood clotting.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Smoking history.
- Previous surgery.
- Previous problems with anesthetics, including local anesthetics.
- Any other health problems.

THE PROCEDURE

- You will be given an anesthetic so you do not feel pain. Breast augmentation is usually done under general anesthesia (*you will be asleep for the procedure*). Sometimes it is done under local anesthesia (*breast area will be numbed, but you will be awake*).
- A small cut (*incision*) will be made in your breast. The cut can be made near the nipple, in the crease beneath the breast, or in the armpit.
- The tissues inside the breast are pulled away from the muscles. This creates an open area for the implant. Alternatively, a space is created under the muscles for the implant.
- The implant is put in.
- The incision will be closed with stitches and covered with surgical tape.

AFTER THE SURGERY

- Your breasts will be wrapped in gauze.
- You will be taken to a recovery area and monitored until the anesthesia wears off.
- If your surgery is an outpatient procedure, you will be able to go home the same day. Sometimes, however, an overnight stay is needed.

POSSIBLE RISKS & COMPLICATIONS

- A reaction to the anesthesia.
- An incision that heals slowly.
- Blood pooling near the incision site that needs to be drained.
- Blood clots.
- Infection. Sometimes an infection cannot be treated, and an implant needs to be removed. This is rare.
- Loss of feeling (*numbness*) in the nipple or breast. Sometimes feeling returns, but not always.
- Unattractive scars.
- Hardened breasts. This can be caused by scarring inside the breast. It can be painful and might require additional surgery.
- A break (*rupture*) in the implants. This can cause leaks. If a saline implant leaks, the implant will collapse and the water will be absorbed by the body. If a gel implant leaks, the implant might not collapse. The gel can collect in other areas of the breast. In either case, more surgery could be needed.
- Ongoing pain.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Someone will need to stay with you for at least 24 hours after your surgery.
- Your breasts will probably be sore for a few days. Take any pain medicine your surgeon prescribed. Follow the directions carefully. Take all of the medicine.
- Ask your surgeon whether you can take over-the-counter medicines for pain or nausea. Do not take aspirin, unless your caregiver says that you should. Aspirin increases the chances of bleeding.
- Carefully follow the instructions about caring for your incisions. Stitches are usually taken out in 7 to 10 days. Make sure you know when you can remove the gauze or dressing on your breasts.
- Do not shower or take a bath for a few days after surgery. Take a sponge bath instead.
- Rest for the first few days after surgery, but get up and walk around several times in the morning and evening. Moving around will help prevent blood clots and pneumonia.
- For the first 5 to 7 days, avoid turning or twisting your upper body. Move your arms as little as possible.
- For 3 weeks after surgery, do not lift anything that weighs more than 5 pounds.
- Limit driving until you are no longer taking prescription pain medicines. They can make you sleepy.
- Do not do heavy physical work for a month. This includes things like yard work and moving storage boxes.
- How soon you can return to work depends on what type of work you do. For instance, if you have a desk job, you could be back to work in 2 weeks. If you do manual labor, it may take longer.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your breasts feel warm to the touch.
- Your breasts look red.
- Swelling or bruising of the breasts does not get better in a few days.
- Blood or fluid oozes from an incision.
- The incision smells bad.
- Your pain gets worse or does not get better with pain medicine.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have chest pain.

- Your heartbeat is abnormal.
- You have trouble breathing.
- Your legs or arms start to swell.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.

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