



Nuffield Hospital Brighton
Warren Road, Woodingdean, Brighton BN2 6DX
(T) 01273 621 144
(F) 01273 690 670
(E) info@andrewyelland.com
www.andrewyelland.com

Breast Enlargement (Augmentation) General Information

Technically known as augmentation mammoplasty, breast enlargement surgery uses implants to enhance the size and fullness of a woman's breasts.

A trusted procedure, it is chosen by women for a variety of reasons:

- Some women have always felt their breasts were too small and believe larger breasts will make them feel more attractive and confident.
- Others may be dissatisfied by the way their breasts look after pregnancy. Others have always felt self conscious about their breasts being different sizes and wish to correct this imbalance.

Finally, many women choose breast enlargement as a reconstructive technique after breast surgery.

Making a thoughtful decision

The best candidates for breast enlargement surgery are women who are physically healthy and realistic about their expectations. They understand that the surgery can produce striking improvements, but not perfection. They also understand that while breast augmentation surgery will change their appearance it will not change their lives.

Most important, they have decided to have breast augmentation surgery because it's something they want for themselves – not to please anyone else.

Before you choose to have breast enhancement surgery it's important to think these issues through, and discuss them candidly with your surgeon.

Understanding the procedure

During breast enhancement surgery, your surgeon will place an implant behind each breast, inserting it either under your breast tissue or behind the muscle on which the breast lies. These implants are most often



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inserted through incisions below the breast but may be placed through incisions made around the nipple, in the armpit or in the tummy button.

The implants themselves may be round or teardrop shaped depending on which design your surgeon feels is best for you. They are filled with either silicone gel or a salt-water solution known as saline.

Thinking about silicone

Whatever the filling of the implant, the outer layer will be made of silicone, so it's helpful to know a bit about this material.

Silicone is made of a number of naturally occurring elements including carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and silicon – an element found in sand, quartz and rock. It has been used in a variety of products – including suntan lotions, moisturizing creams and various medical devices – for decades.

Over the years there has been some controversy about whether silicones can cause various diseases. However, as a result of rigorous studies, including those conducted by an independent government review body, we can say that at present there is no evidence to suggest that silicone breast implants cause autoimmune disease.

Further, these studies have found that:

- Women with silicone gel implants are not more likely to suffer from ill health or any connective tissue or joint diseases.
- There is no evidence that children of women with silicone gel implants are at greater risk for disease.
- The risks to women with silicone gel implants are no greater than those of women with other implants.

Breast implants can, however, interfere with standard mammography as they may obscure some of the underlying tissue. Because of this, you should inform your radiologist that you have implants before having a mammogram.



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Planning your surgery

During your initial consultation, your surgeon will evaluate your health and explain the surgical technique he feels will be best for you based on your breasts and skin tone. If your breasts are sagging, he may also advise an uplift procedure.

Your initial consultation is also the time for you to discuss the results you are looking for, including how much larger you would like your breasts to be. This is an issue you want to think through carefully as a very large augmentation won't look natural and may cause rippling of the skin in the sides of the breast.

It's very important that you be totally frank with your surgeon about your expectations and the goals you want to achieve – and equally important that your surgeon be frank with you about your alternatives and the plusses and minuses of each.

Evaluating risks and limitations

During your consultation, your surgeon will also talk to you about the complications and limitations of breast enhancement surgery.

He will explain that the body always forms a capsule of scar tissue around the implant, and that this capsule can become contracted, leading to pain and/or a hard feel to the implant. Fortunately, with today's designs, this is only an issue for about five percent of patients.

Your surgeon will also explain that a breast with an implant may not feel like a normal breast and some women are acutely aware of the feel of the implant inside their breast. Many other women report a difference in nipple and skin sensation after their surgery.

Other limitations include the possibility that breast augmentation may make the normal difference in size between your breasts more noticeable and the fact that your surgery will leave scars. These will most likely end up as white lines after several months but may always be noticeable.

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While breast enhancement surgery has been performed successfully on millions of women it does, like all major surgery, carry some risk of chest infection, particularly among women who smoke. There is also some risk of clotting in the veins of the legs.

Preparing for surgery

Your surgeon will give you guidelines on eating and drinking and medications to avoid before your surgery. He may also suggest you visit your general practitioner, particularly if you have medical problems.

Your surgery will take between one and two hours and will be performed under general anaesthetic.

Stitches will be used to close the incisions. These will be covered by steristrips and dressings and, finally, a sports bra.

Your dressings will be removed 24 hours after your surgery but the steristrips will be left in place and reviewed during a visit 10 days later.

Getting back on your feet

You should expect some discomfort during the first two or three days after your surgery, especially when you move around or cough. However you'll be up and about within 24 hours.

You may also experience a burning sensation in your nipples but this will subside in about two weeks and your surgeon will prescribe medication to lessen your discomfort. Other normal symptoms include hearing a "sloshing" sound inside your breasts and finding a "bubble-wrap" like change in the skin near your breast. Both these symptoms should resolve after two or three days.

You'll be most comfortable if you continue wearing a sports bra like the one you were fitted with after your surgery around the clock for the first two or three weeks as your bruising subsides.

Surgical drains are not used, so there are none to be removed and as your stitches are dissolvable they will not need removal either. Should a small amount of stitch be visible it may be cut short or simply left in place until it dissolves.



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You may get your wounds wet after the first 48 hours, however showering is better than bathing to avoid soaking the wounds. If the skin of your breasts is very dry it will help to use a moisturizer several times a day, however it is important not to get it on the suture area.

Enjoying your new look

You should be able to return to work within a few days, depending on the level of activity required by your job. Your surgeon will advise you on when you can begin exercising and other normal activities.

During this time you will probably still experience some discomfort, however, you will also be able to enjoy your new, fuller look and enhanced sense of confidence.

Your breasts may be quite sensitive for two or three weeks so you will want to avoid direct stimulation. Once they are no longer sore, usually within three to four weeks after surgery, contact is fine.

Your scars will be firm and pink for at least six weeks. After that they may remain the same size for several months or even appear to widen. After several months, though, your scars will begin to fade, although they will never disappear entirely.