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Breast Uplift (Mastopexy) General Information

If you're thinking about breast uplift surgery

The shape of a women's breasts change with age. They can lose their fullness and also start to droop more (called ptosis). These changes vary between different women, and can also be more marked after childbirth or after weight loss. These changes in appearance may be distressing to some women who may then seek the advice of a cosmetic surgeon. All forms of surgery of this nature will however involve some form of scarring.

What can be done?

The breast uplift operation is called mastopexy and is an operation that removes mainly excess skin from the breasts. The breasts are reshaped and the nipples repositioned to form newer uplifted breasts. If you're having an implant inserted along with your breast lift, it will be placed in a pocket directly under the breast tissue, or deeper, under the muscle of the chest wall.

What to expect from your surgery?

Apart from the change in shape the most obvious consequences are the scars. These are designed to be invisible whilst wearing normal clothing and as far as possible are designed to lie under the average bra or bikini top. Over the months following surgery the scars will fade. The scars will always be visible when clothing is not worn and will vary from one woman to another.

The nipples are likely to be less sensitive following surgery because nerves are divided. This numbness can extend over part of the breast as well.



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Will the improvements last?

Changes in weight in the years after surgery may influence the shape of your breasts. The shape of your breasts will continue to change with age. You can delay this tendency by supporting your breasts in well fitting bras.

What to expect before the operation?

You will be admitted the day before or on the day of surgery. While in hospital and before your operation both your surgeon and the anaesthetist who will be putting you to sleep will see you. The staff on the ward will help you to settle in. You may be fitted with a pair of elastic stockings and have an injection that can help to reduce the risk of developing clots in your veins after surgery. The operation is carried out under general anaesthetic and when you wake at the end of the operation there will be some discomfort which will last for two or three days. You will be given pain killing injections or tablets.

A well fitting bra will need to be worn following surgery but because of post operative swelling the final shape of your breasts may not be obvious for several weeks. There is likely to be some tenderness and lumpiness of the breast for several weeks or months following surgery but there is no reason why you cannot sunbathe and go swimming once the scars have fully healed.

What are the risks?

Any major operation with a general anaesthetic carries a small risk of chest infection particularly among people who smoke.

Infections in the breast tissue can be troublesome. Infection can be treated with antibiotics, but it will delay the healing process, scars are likely to be worse to start with.

Healing problems may occur, and a scab may form which will eventually separate to leave a broad scar. The nipple disc, and the skin where the scars meet underneath the breast are the parts most likely to be affected. People who smoke are at greater risk of this problem happening.

Usually the scars settle well to end up as white lines but they will always be noticeable. However, some people have an inborn tendency for scars to stretch and sometimes scars can stay thick, red and irritable



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for a long time. There is no evidence that mastopexy causes or influences breast cancer in any way. The operation does also not prevent your breasts from being examined for cancer in the usual way.

How to prepare for the operation?

It is probably a good idea to see your general practitioner prior to the surgery, particularly if you have other medical problems. Your surgeon is likely to recommend that you reduce weight if you are overweight. Smoking does affect the healing of the breast wounds and should be cut down or given up before surgery.

If you're having an implant inserted along with your breast lift, it will be placed in a pocket directly under the breast tissue, or deeper, under the muscle of the chest wall.

After the Surgery?

After surgery, you'll need to wear a sports bra night and day for at least 10 days. Your breasts may be bruised, swollen, and uncomfortable for a day or two, but the pain shouldn't be severe. Any discomfort you do feel can be relieved with medications prescribed by your surgeon.

At ten days you will be reviewed by your surgeon and any dressings will be removed. The stitches used will be dissolvable and will not need to be removed. If your breast skin is very dry following surgery, you can apply a moisturizer several times a day. Be careful not to tug at your skin in the process, and keep the moisturizer away from the suture areas.

You can expect some loss of feeling in your nipples and breast skin, caused by the swelling after surgery. This numbness usually fades as the swelling subsides over the next six weeks or so. In some patients, however, it may last a year or more, and occasionally it may be permanent.

Getting back to normal?

Healing is a gradual process. Although you may be up and about in a day or two, don't plan on returning to work for a week or more, depending on how you feel. And avoid lifting anything over your head for three to four weeks. If you have any unusual symptoms, don't hesitate to call your surgeon.



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Your surgeon will give you instructions for resuming your normal activities. You may be instructed to avoid strenuous sports for about a month. After that, you can resume these activities slowly.

Your new look?

Your surgeon will make every effort to make your scars as inconspicuous as possible. Still, it's important to remember that mastopexy scars can be extensive and permanent. They often remain lumpy and red for months, then gradually become less obvious, sometimes eventually fading to thin white lines. Fortunately, the scars can usually be placed so that you can wear even low-cut tops.

You should also keep in mind that a breast lift won't keep you firm forever--the effects of gravity, pregnancy, aging, and weight fluctuations will eventually affect your breasts again. Women who have implants along with their breast lift may find the results last longer.