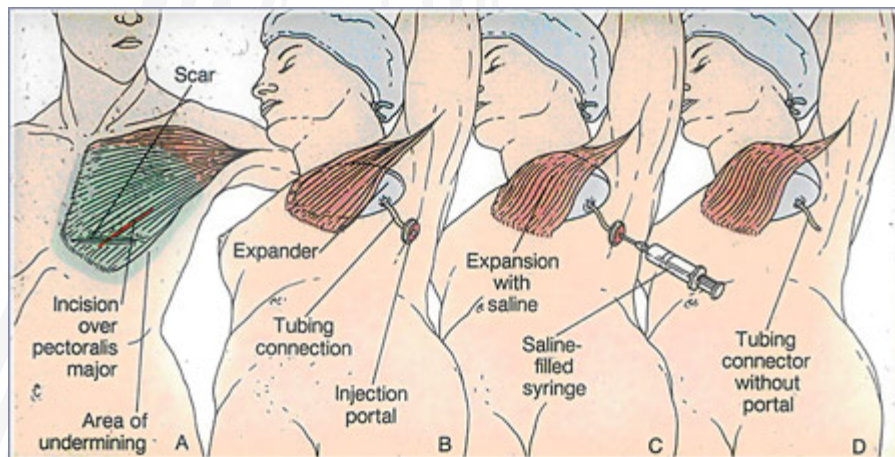


Breast Reconstruction – SM Expander General Information

The simplest way to reconstruct a breast is to use an implant. During a mastectomy, however, the aim of the operation will have been to leave the chest wall flat so that an external prosthesis can be worn over the skin without rubbing. This means that the skin overlying the chest wall must be stretched up and this can be done using an implant that is expandable.



The expander implant is placed under the chest skin and muscle and the tissues are then gently stretched. Essentially the implant is a small balloon that can be inflated with salt water via a valve placed under the skin. Once the tissues have matched the opposite side either the expander can be left in place and the valve removed or the expander changed for a different permanent implant.

This type of procedure is good for patients who don't want scars on other parts of the body, whose breasts are relatively small or do not have a large degree of droop.



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What else do I need to know?

Recurrence of Breast Cancer There is no evidence that having a reconstruction increases the risk of cancer returning or delays the diagnosis of recurrence but also you should not allow reconstruction to interfere with treatment for the breast cancer and having a reconstruction will not stop a recurrence of the cancer, if it were to occur.

Possible complications include:

Infection Superficial wound infection is easily treated with antibiotics. Infection of the implant are troublesome as, generally, the implant must be removed to fully treat the infection, and re-inserted at a later date.

Bleeding It is common to have a small degree of oozing at the wound edges, but it is possible to develop a collection of blood under the skin. If this happens it may need to be let out by returning to theatre and re-opening the wound.