

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction is a way to simulate the breast shape after a natural breast has been removed. Women of all ages are finding that breast reconstruction can be a step toward restoring their bodies and their former lifestyles. Even after reconstruction, a woman still needs to take part in breast health exams and care.

Some women start reconstruction at the same time as their mastectomy; other women wait several months or years. It is best to discuss this option with a board-certified plastic surgeon before your surgery. It is also important to verify what your medical insurance covers regarding the cost of reconstruction.

TYPES OF BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction with Implants: Implants are sacs filled with saline (salt water) or silicone (a type of plastic). The sacs are placed under your chest wall or skin.

Reconstruction with Tissue Flaps: Sometimes a woman does not have enough natural skin or muscle to cover an implant. Also, a woman may not want an implant placed in her body. In these cases, muscle, fat and skin from another part of the body can be moved to the chest area. It is then shaped into the form of a breast. The needed tissue can be taken from the lower stomach, back or buttocks.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

- What types of reconstructive surgery are available?
- What is the latest information about implant safety?
- How many breast reconstruction procedures have you done?
- What type of surgery is best for me and will give me the best result?
- What is the risk of rejection and/or infection?
- Can you show me pictures of women with good and average looking reconstruction?

- What are the risks and side effects of breast reconstruction?
- If I do not choose reconstruction, what prostheses or breast forms are available?
- Can you refer me to a counselor for additional support in making a decision and discussing my feelings?
- How many operations are needed?
- What can I expect my recovery experience to be?
- Is there much pain after surgery?
- Are special bras needed after surgery?
- How will the reconstructed breast compare in appearance with my other breast? Will it have feeling? Will I have a nipple?
- Will my health insurance cover this type of surgery?

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION RESOURCES

American Cancer Society **800-ACS-2345**
www.cancer.org (800-227-2345)
 Free information regarding breast reconstruction is available upon request.

American Society of Plastic Surgeons..... **800-635-0635**
www.plasticsurgery.org
 Provides information on reconstruction and referrals to board-certified plastic surgeons by geographic area.

California Society of Plastic Surgeons **800-722-2777**
www.californiaplasticsurgeons.org
 Provides California board-certified plastic surgeon referrals.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure **800-IM-AWARE**
www.komen.org (800-462-9273)
 Offers up-to-date information on reconstruction options. Volunteers are available to take calls 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. CST.