

Breast Reconstruction

Some women who plan to have a mastectomy decide to have breast reconstruction. Other women prefer to wear a breast form (*prosthesis*). Others decide to do nothing. All of these options have pros and cons. What is right for one woman may not be right for another. What is important is that nearly every woman treated for breast cancer has choices.

Breast reconstruction may be done at the same time as the mastectomy, or later on. If you are thinking about breast reconstruction, you should talk to a plastic surgeon before the mastectomy, even if you plan to have your reconstruction later on.

There are many ways to reconstruct the breast. Some women choose to have implants. Implants may be made of saline or silicone. The safety of silicone breast implants has been under review by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for several years. If you are thinking about having silicone implants, you may want to talk with your doctor about the FDA findings. Your doctor can tell you if silicone implants are an option. You also can read information from the FDA on breast implants at <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/breastimplants/>.

You also may have breast reconstruction with tissue that the plastic surgeon moves from another part of your body. Skin, muscle, and fat can come from your lower abdomen, back, or buttocks. The surgeon uses this tissue to create a breast shape.

Which type of reconstruction is best depends on your age, body type, and the type of surgery you had. The plastic surgeon can explain the risks and benefits of each type of reconstruction.

You may want to ask your doctor these questions about breast reconstruction:

- What is the latest information about the safety of silicone breast implants?
- Which type of surgery would give me the best results? How will I look afterward?
- When can my reconstruction begin?
- How many surgeries will I need?
- What are the risks at the time of surgery? Later?
- Will I have scars? Where? What will they look like?
- If tissue from another part of my body is used, will there be any permanent changes where the tissue was removed?
- What activities should I avoid? When can I return to my normal activities?
- Will I need follow-up care?
- How much will reconstruction cost? Will my health insurance pay for it?