



CONSIDERING
IMPLANTS?

Weigh Your Options

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You've shed the pounds; now could be the time to shed your old body image.

After massive weight loss, some women find that their breasts seem out of proportion with their slimmer bodies. Breasts can become smaller in relation to the hips, creating an unbalanced figure, and they may sag more because of the decrease in volume. The result can be a matronly look—not the youthful appearance of a person who has worked hard to lose weight and become fit. That's when it's time to talk to a board-certified plastic surgeon and explore today's options for enhancing breasts.

Breast enhancement can boost your appearance and self-confidence. It can help you feel more feminine, even sexier. But it is important to be realistic about your expectations. The best candidates for breast enhancement are women who are looking for improvement, not perfection. Women who have had bariatric surgery also need to be sure their weight has stabilized and their bodies have a healthy nutritional makeup before undergoing procedures.

Implant Options

Women today have two choices for breast implants: silicone-gel-filled (gel implants) or saline-filled (saline implants). The outer shells of both types of implants are made of a solid silicone material frequently used in implantable medical devices. Gel implants are filled with silicone gel, a semi-solid, while saline implants are filled with sterile salt water, the same kind used in IV fluids. Saline implants were formally approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2000 after decades of use.

Last November, the FDA approved gel implants for women aged 22 and older. This decision opened the door for more women to consider gel implants, reversing a 1992 ruling that restricted their use to patients meeting specific criteria. The latest FDA approval reflects more than a decade of scientific studies indicating that gel implants do not increase a woman's chance of developing cancer, autoimmune diseases or connective tissue diseases.

FDA approval does not mean implants are entirely risk-free, however. All implants carry a small risk of rupture and complications. Women should also keep in mind that implants can interfere with mammogram readings; women with implants require additional views during mammography imaging.

The type of implant you choose will also have certain advantages and disadvantages. Gel implants feel and look more natural than saline implants because they have a texture similar to breast tissue. In other words, they have that certain softness that real breasts have. Thin-skinned women are often candidates for gel implants because saline implants can occasionally show rippling on the edges. Some people believe gel implants also drape more naturally across the chest, but a skillful surgeon knows how to position both types of implants for a realistic effect. One drawback of gel implants is that if a rupture occurs it can be more difficult to detect than in saline implants. That's why women who receive gel implants must be medically monitored more closely than those with saline.

If a saline implant leaks or breaks, the problem is usually noticeable fairly quickly, like a water balloon deflating. The size of saline implants can also be altered more easily, depending on the needs of the patient, because saline implants feature small valves that allow the doctor to adjust the levels of saline. The size of gel implants cannot be changed without actually exchanging the implant. Finally, saline implants are less costly—typically \$1,000 less than gels.

How It Works

Breast enhancement has been available in the U.S. for more than 40 years, and surgical techniques are constantly being refined to improve safety, reliability and aesthetics.

Methods for inserting and positioning implants depend upon the patient's anatomy and the doctor's recommendations. At our practice, we insert the implants from an incision under the breast for optimum results, but incisions can be made through the armpit, nipple or belly button if necessary.

Your doctor may recommend a breast lift as part of the enhancement procedure. Breast lifts remove excess skin resulting from weight loss or the aging process. Nipples and areolas (the pigmented skin surrounding nipples) are shifted higher. The areola, which in a sagging breast may have stretched, can be reduced for a more attractive appearance. The result is a perkier, more youthful breast. ❖

For further information, consult with a board-certified plastic surgeon.



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