



Breast Reconstruction

Breast reconstruction uses various techniques to restore the appearance of the breast following a breast lumpectomy or mastectomy. It is highly individualized and typically involves several procedures over a course of time. Most women are good candidates for breast reconstruction as long as they do not have other medical conditions that significantly impair healing.

Since the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 was passed, breast reconstruction is covered by insurance. This includes reconstruction of the breast on the side which the mastectomy is performed, as well as surgery on the other breast to restore symmetry. More recently, this also includes surgical treatments for potential complications of breast cancer surgery, including lymphedema.

Techniques for breast reconstruction include:
Post-ablative mammoplasty (oncoplastic surgery)
Tissue expansion and implant-based surgery
Local flap surgery (latissimus flap)
Microsurgery (DIEP, muscle sparing TRAM, TRAM)
Symmetrizing/secondary revision
Nipple reconstruction/nipple tattooing

Advancements in breast reconstruction

The most common method of breast reconstruction involves placing an implant (silicone or saline) under the chest wall muscle. In order to create space for the implant, a tissue expander is placed



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under the muscle at the time of mastectomy. The muscle is then expanded, or stretched, which results in discomfort immediately after surgery. In some patients, it may also result in an "animation deformity", where the movement or flexing of the pectoral (chest wall) muscle is visible.

A new technique in the field of breast reconstruction involves pre-pectoral placement of the implant. In this surgery, the tissue expander is placed above the muscle. This is associated with less post-surgical pain, and may allow the patient to go home on the same day of surgery. This is now one of many reconstructive options available to patients undergoing mastectomy. It is important to talk to your breast surgeon and plastic reconstructive surgeon to find out which method is best suited to your individual situation, and cosmetic and recovery goals.