



**University Hospitals Birmingham**  
NHS Foundation Trust



# **Reduction Mammoplasty**

## **Your operation explained**

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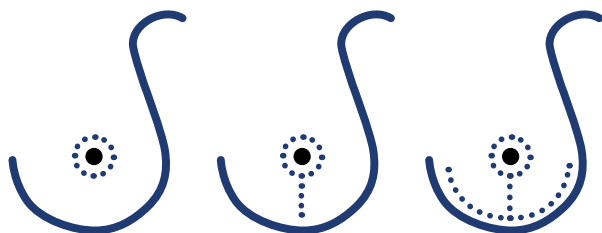
## Introduction

This booklet is designed to give you information about having a mammoplasty and the care you will receive before, during and after your operation. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your surgeon and breast care nurse, but it may help you to understand more about what is discussed.

## What is a reduction mammoplasty?

Reduction mammoplasty is an operation to reduce the size of the breast. Usually after the operation the breast is smaller with the nipple in a higher position than previously and a normal breast shape. Often this operation is performed to improve the symmetry between two breasts after an operation on the other side.

Scars will occur after surgery, and these are usually around the nipple and down into the fold of the breast so they will usually be hidden by the bra cup. Other scar patterns are sometimes used and your surgeon will discuss this with you. As time passes the scar will fade and become less visible, although it will never completely vanish.



Different types of mammoplasty scar patterns

## Is a reduction mammoplasty the right operation for me?

Reduction mammoplasty will normally be recommended for patients with a difference in breast size, usually following an operation on one breast. You do not have to undergo surgery to improve the symmetry of your breasts but some patients find that it helps with fitting a bra or how they feel wearing certain clothes.

## What are the alternatives to a mammoplasty?

Wearing a prosthetic – patients can be fitted with a prosthetic to help improve symmetry of the breasts when dressed. The breast care nurses will be able to discuss options further with you.

## What are the risks of a mammoplasty operation?

Possible risks and complications include:

- **Bleeding:** You should not be concerned if you find a small amount of blood spotting on your wound dressing, but if more bleeding than this occurs after your discharge from hospital or if you notice a large swelling, you should contact the breast care nurses or GP immediately.
- **Infection:** If your wound becomes inflamed, red, hot, sore or oozes pus you should contact your breast care nurse or GP for assessment and possible antibiotic treatment.
- **Seroma:** This is a collection of fluid under the wound. This is very common after breast surgery and sometimes the fluid is drained with a needle in clinic.
- **Numbness or change in sensation in the breast/arm:** Surgery can cause damage to the nerves. Some of this may improve over time, although the scar itself will remain numb permanently. You may also have change in sensation to the nipple.
- **Thrombosis:** This is a risk with all surgery and occurs when a blood clot forms in a vein, usually in the leg. You will be provided with support stockings and advised to wear them for 2 weeks. You may be offered blood thinning (anticoagulation) injections depending on your risk.
- **A hard lump in the breast:** This can occur when an area of fat loses its blood supply and is called 'fat necrosis'. This may require further imaging and sometimes a biopsy to confirm the diagnosis. This should settle with time.
- **Nipple necrosis or loss:** This is where the nipple loses its blood supply and happens rarely during this type of procedure.

The breast care nurses are available to give advice, information and support throughout the course of your treatment and follow-up care. Please do not hesitate to contact them at the hospital if you are worried or have any questions that you would like to ask.

## **What can I do before the operation?**

Before the operation there are some things that you can do to help reduce the risks of an operation including infection. These are:

- Stopping smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- If you are diabetic maintain good blood sugar control
- Continue taking your prescribed medications from your GP (you will be advised if any of these need to be stopped prior to surgery)
- Exercise regularly – this is also important after your surgery as part of your recovery
- Do not shave or remove hair from the surgical area prior to surgery (this will be done at the time of surgery if required, if done before it may cause small cuts in the skin which can increase the risk of infection)
- Have a shower or bath prior to the operation
- Keep warm around the time of surgery, often patients are advised to bring a dressing gown with them on the day of surgery

## **What happens before the operation?**

Before your admission to hospital, you may be asked to attend a pre-operative assessment clinic. Here, relevant tests and examinations are done i.e. physical examination, blood tests and possibly heart monitoring also known as electrocardiogram (ECG).

You will normally be admitted on the morning of your operation. You will be asked not to eat, drink or smoke for a period of time before your operation. Your surgeon or nurse will clarify this for you. Please bath or shower prior to admission if possible. You will be asked to remove all make-up and nail varnish before your operation and all jewellery except a wedding ring. You will also be fitted with

support stockings which should be worn before the operation and for two weeks afterwards. These are to minimise the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT). An anticoagulation injection may be prescribed daily for you to further reduce the chances of DVT.

Before the operation your surgeon will mark you for surgery. This involves drawing on the skin and taking measurements to help plan the operation.

## **How will I recover from the operation?**

The operation itself takes about two hours and is under a general anaesthetic. After the operation time is spent in the recovery room until you are awake enough to return to the ward. You may find that you have an intravenous infusion or 'drip' in your arm for a few hours.

This is to give you fluids directly into a vein until you feel able to drink, usually later on in the same day. Expect to feel sore for a few days. Painkillers will be offered on a regular basis and to take home. If these are not effective in controlling your pain, please inform the nurse so that alternative pain relief can be offered to you.

## **When can I return home?**

Most people go home the following day, although some feel well enough to go home on the same day as the operation. Once you are back at home, you may find that you have a few days feeling low. If you feel your low moods are continuing and you would like to talk further, please feel able to call your breast care nurse. If you wish, further support or counselling can be arranged.

## **How should I care for the wound?**

Your wound will be covered with a splashproof dressing and you will be able shower as usual during this time. Try to keep the flow of water away from the wound and dry the area thoroughly after showering. Sometimes a dressing with a battery pack is used to promote wound healing (a negative pressure dressing) and gently draw fluid away from

the wound. If you have one of these dressings, you will be advised how to care for it and they usually stay on for 1-2 weeks.

Any stitches (sutures) will be dissolvable and will not require removal. You will be reviewed a few days after surgery and the breast care nurses will review you further if required. They will remove your dressings and assess healing. Steri-strips (small strips of dressings) may be used to give extra support to the wound. You can get these wet and they will start to loosen after about 10 days when they can be eased off, as you would a plaster. You will be asked to keep your bra with you whilst in hospital so you can wear it soon after the operation for support. A supportive bra should be worn day and night for 6 weeks after your operation to help with the healing process. Your bra should be comfortable and supportive.

## **What will happen after discharge?**

Although adjustment may not be easy after the operation, be kind to yourself and take time to recover. The length of time needed to rest and recover after this operation depends very much on you as an individual. There are no real restrictions on what you may or may not do, but heavy lifting is not advised for at least six weeks. You can expect to feel a little sore for a few days. Please take your painkillers regularly as directed. If these are not effective, please contact your GP.

## **When can I start exercising?**

You are able to start walking the day after your operation as long as you are comfortable. You are able to start swimming once your wounds are fully healed, usually about four weeks after surgery. More strenuous exercise and heavy lifting can be resumed when your own doctor, breast care nurse or consultant advises, this is usually around 6-8 weeks after surgery.

## **When can I drive?**

You can drive as soon as you can make an emergency stop without discomfort. This may be about 10 days after the operation. You must

also be comfortable wearing a seat belt. You should speak to your insurance company about any restrictions following surgery. It is advisable to go out with another driver on the first trip to ensure you feel fully confident.

## When can I return to work?

If you work then you may return when you wish, although most people feel that they do need a few weeks off to get over the emotional and physical strain of having surgery. Six to eight weeks is about the usual length of time to take off work, but this differs from person to person. A sick note can be provided by your team on the day of surgery.

## What about sex?

You can resume sexual relations when you feel comfortable doing so. Please ask about contraception issues if you have been using the oral contraceptive pill or other hormone based medication (such as HRT). Your breast care nurse or doctor will be happy to discuss this with you if you have any concerns.

## Who are the breast care nurses?

You will have met one of the breast care nurses in the outpatient clinic before your admission. They are here to offer you and your partner advice, information and support throughout the course of your treatment and follow up. They will see you regularly at your request – don't hesitate to ask for support if anything is worrying you. Please contact: Queen Elizabeth Hospital team: **0121 371 4499** or **07771 940 368** or Solihull Hospital team: **0121 424 5306**.

Further information is available from the Patrick Room in the Cancer Centre Outpatients. The telephone number is **0121 371 3537** or you can drop in for advice.

Cancer support workers are also available for advice in the oncology department.

It is important that you make a list of all medicines you are taking and bring it with you to all your follow-up clinic appointments. If you have any questions at all, please ask your surgeon or nurse. It may help to write down questions as you think of them so that you have them ready. It may also help to bring someone with you when you attend your outpatient appointments.

## **Glossary of medical terms used in this information**

**Anaesthetic:** a drug that causes a loss of feeling or sensation.

**Anticoagulant:** any substance that prevents blood clotting.

**ECG:** also known as an electrocardiogram is a test which measures the electrical activity of the heart.

**Intravenous:** fluids given into a vein.

**Seroma:** a swelling caused by a watery fluid in the blood, known as serum, collecting within the cavity caused by the surgery.

**Thrombosis:** a blood clot within a vein.

Local sources of further information: The Patrick Room Cancer Centre Heritage Building (Queen Elizabeth Hospital), Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TH Telephone: **0121 371 3537**  
Breast Care Nursing Team Queen Elizabeth Hospital: **0121 371 4499** or **07771 940 368** Breast Care Nursing Team Solihull Hospital: **0121 424 5306**

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email **[interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk)**.

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## **BREAST SURGERY**

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