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Breast Reduction / Reduction Mammoplasty

Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

Overly large and pendulous breasts can be as distressing for a woman as extremely small breasts. In addition to cosmetic concerns, many women experience breast pain, shoulder discomfort, neck pain, or back pain.

Other difficulties may include:

- The need for special supportive undergarments
- Difficulty finding well-fitting clothing
- Skin irritation beneath the breasts
- Limitations in sport or physical activities

Breast reduction surgery can significantly improve both physical comfort and body proportion.

What is Breast Reduction Surgery?

Breast reduction surgery (reduction mammoplasty) is a procedure designed to reduce the size and weight of the breasts while restoring a natural breast shape.

The operation involves:

- Removal of excess breast tissue, fat and skin
- Reshaping of the remaining breast tissue
- Repositioning of the nipple and areola to a higher, more natural position

As breasts enlarge over time they may develop varying degrees of sagging, with the nipple gradually shifting to a lower position. Breast reduction surgery therefore includes lifting and repositioning the nipple to match the new breast contour.

Surgical Scars

The surgical scars are typically positioned:

- Around the areola

- Vertically down the lower breast
- In the infra-mammary fold (the natural crease beneath the breast)

These scars are usually more noticeable during the first 6–12 months after surgery but gradually soften and fade with time. They will not disappear completely.

Every effort is made to keep the scar in the breast crease as short as possible without compromising the final breast shape.

Surgical Considerations and Tissue Healing

During breast reduction surgery, tissues are shifted, partially removed and reshaped to achieve the desired contour. This process involves partial separation of tissue from its normal blood supply.

Most patients heal well, however in very large reductions the degree of repositioning may place stress on tissue circulation. In rare cases small areas of tissue may heal slowly or be replaced by scar tissue.

The nipple and areola require the greatest repositioning. With modern techniques complications are very rare, however partial or complete loss of the nipple is theoretically possible.

Nipple Sensation

Changes in nipple sensation may occur after surgery. These may include:

- Temporary reduced sensitivity
- Permanent reduction in sensitivity
- Rarely complete loss of nipple sensation

It should be noted that very large pendulous breasts often already have reduced sensitivity prior to surgery.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding may still be possible after reduction mammoplasty in many patients. However, because breast tissue and ducts are partially removed or repositioned during surgery, future breastfeeding cannot be guaranteed.

The Operation

The procedure is performed under general anaesthesia.

The operation typically takes approximately 2–3 hours depending on the degree of reduction required.

Hospital Stay

Patients will usually remain in hospital overnight following surgery for observation and recovery.

Sutures

Sutures used during the procedure are absorbable and do not need to be removed.

Post-Operative Care

Your first two post-operative consultations will usually be with the Nursing Sister, who will assess wound healing and provide further post-operative guidance.

Support Garments

A supportive surgical bra must be worn for four weeks after surgery, both day and night.

This helps support the healing tissues, reduce swelling, and maintain the breast shape during recovery.

Recovery and Final Results

Although the breasts will appear smaller immediately after surgery, swelling will gradually settle over time.

It may take up to one year for the final breast shape to fully settle and for scars to mature.

Possible Risks and Complications

All surgical procedures carry some risks. Possible complications include:

- Bleeding
- Bruising
- Infection
- Delayed wound healing
- Scarring
- Breast asymmetry
- Changes in nipple sensation
- Fat necrosis
- Rare nipple or tissue loss
- Need for revision surgery

These risks will be discussed in detail during your consultation.