

Breast Augmentation

Professor J D Frame
FRCS, FRCS (Plast.)

Consultant Plastic
and
Aesthetic Surgeon

Breast Augmentation

Consultations at:

Springfield Hospital,
Chelmsford, Essex

The Lavenham Clinic,
Lavenham, Suffolk

Secretary:-
Springfield Hospital
Lawn Lane
Springfield
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 7GU

Phone: 01245 460981
Fax: 01245 460991
Email: info@professorjamesframe.co.uk
www.professorjamesframe.co.uk
www.ukaaps.org

Tel: 01245 460981

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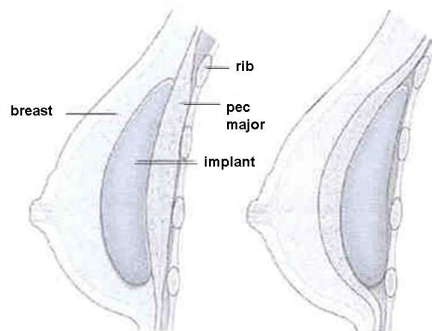
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Breast Augmentation

Breast Augmentation is the term given to the enhancement of a woman's breast, usually, but not exclusively, by the use of implants. There is great variety in the size and shape of women's breasts. In part this is due to the way the breast bud grows in adolescence under the influence of female hormones and there are genetic factors involved. The quality of skin, underlying muscles and chest wall skeleton are also variants that will determine the end shape of the breast. It is almost the norm that the two breasts will have a variable degree of asymmetry.

Once developed, the breasts may fluctuate in size in response to changes in weight, and normal hormonal influences, such as in pregnancy. Normal ageing causes the shape of the breast to change so that they gradually droop (called ptosis). This effect is greater following pregnancy, breast feeding and in particular after a large weight loss. Breasts can be made larger by placing an implant either behind the breast tissue or behind the muscle on which the breast lies. Implants are usually inserted through incisions in the inframammary fold. Alternatively, the incisions may be made around the nipple or in the axilla.



Implants placed either under the breast tissue or behind the chest muscle

Breast Implants

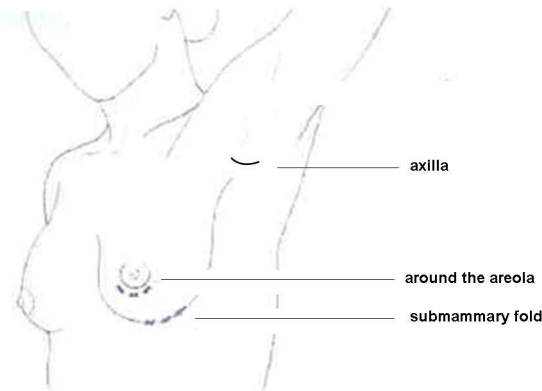
A breast implant is made of an outer layer of silicone, but may be filled with cohesive silicone gel or saline. Some are covered in Polyurethane.

Some implants are round and others are shaped. Either can give excellent results. The life expectancy of the modern implants is unknown and they do not need to

be exchanged unless causing problems. Today's implants have been used since the mid 1990's with no material breakdown. The most recent implant designs are specifically tried and tested with quality of result and safety factors in mind.

Correct Implant sizing

Instead of augmenting into small pockets with large implants, we now measure the correct dimensions of the pockets created behind the breast tissue. These dimensions indicate the diameter of implant to be used. The degree of projection can then be varied but in general terms an augmentation will increase bra size by 1 or 2 cup sizes. There are exceptions and these occur where there are either prominent or recessed ribs, or at patient request, provided it is reasonable. As a rule smaller implants carry less risk.



Possible incision areas for breast implant

Expectations and complications

Leakage of silicone can occur either as a slow seepage, or following rupture of the implant. This silicone is almost always contained within the fibrous capsule which the body forms around the implant. It is exceptional for an implant to rupture nowadays.

The capsule which the body normally forms around the implant can become thickened and contracted. The newer designs of implants have features to reduce the likelihood of this happening. This can lead to pain, and/or an abnormally hard feel of the implant in the breast. Treatment may be needed and occasionally removal of the implant.

Breast augmentation does not usually interfere in breast feeding. The presence of breast implants does interfere in mammography, which is an X-ray screening method for breast cancer. Special X-ray views can be taken to minimize this interference.

Most women have some degree of asymmetry between breasts

and breast augmentation may occasionally exaggerate this difference. A breast that has an underlying implant will not necessarily feel like a normal breast, and some women may be acutely aware of the implant as a foreign body within the breast. There is usually a difference in skin and nipple sensation following breast augmentation. The size and shape of the breast following breast augmentation surgery will adjust with time and is to some extent unpredictable. It is also not always possible to create a 'cleavage' with breast augmentation. The weight of the implant may influence the age-related changes that normally take place in breasts.

Breast augmentation will always leave scars on the breast and although the scars will settle over 12 or more months, the appearance of the scars does vary between different individuals. This scarring is placed in such a position as to minimize visibility even when wearing a swimming costume.

Complications that occur with breast augmentation include those associated with all forms of surgery, as well as the specific problems of bleeding and infection, capsule formation, rippling, folding, displacement and rupture.

Safety of silicone

Whatever the filling of the implant, the outer layer is made of silicone. Silicon is a naturally occurring element which becomes silicone when it is combined with carbon hydrogen and oxygen. Silicone is manufactured into many items including cosmetics, food and medical implants. Many studies have been conducted to establish whether silicone breast implants cause certain diseases. As a result of these studies we can say that at present there is no evidence to suggest that silicone breast implants are associated with an increased incidence of breast cancer. There is also no evidence to suggest that these implants cause autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis. Information about this is available from the Department of Health. There is, however, a degree of unknown about implant safety and if you are in any doubt, it is better not to proceed to augmentation.

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