



*Better  
Together*

**Patient information**

**Information for Patients Considering  
Surgical Breast Lift ( Mastopexy)**

**Breast Services Directorate**

Royal Liverpool Hospital and Broadgreen Hospital      PIF 099/V5

## **What is a breast lift?**

A breast lift is the removal of the skin and sometimes tissue in the lower part of the breast to change its shape. At the same time the nipple will be moved. However, there will be scars on the breast.

You may wish to discuss alternative treatments or procedures. Please ask a doctor or nurse if alternative treatments or procedures are available.

## **What are the benefits of a breast lift?**

This operation will lift the breast and is often done to improve the match with the opposite breast following treatment. Your Consultant will be able to show you pictures of other women who have had this operation.

Your Consultant will also ask you to have pictures taken before and after your operation. Your permission will be needed for this.

## **What are the risks of having a breast lift?**

- Scarring
- Because the nipple is moved, sometimes sensation can be changed, reduced or lost completely. The blood supply to the nipple may be affected resulting in partial or complete loss of the nipple.
- The shape of your breast will change.
- Wound breakdown, particularly under the breasts. This will heal, but may leave unsightly scars and need prolonged dressings. If this happens, the scars will be wider.
- The breast size may not be equal (asymmetry).

- When there is reduced blood supply to the fatty tissues in the breast, the breast may feel hard or lumpy known as fat necrosis. This will often settle and soften with time.

## **What are the alternatives?**

You can choose not to have surgery and your breast will remain the same.

To achieve your breasts looking equal you can wear an external breast shape (prosthesis) in your bra.

## **Longer-term results and changes**

The breast can sag because of the effects of gravity. The amount and speed of this depends on how “stretchy” your own skin and tissues are. It is likely that over the years your breasts will change shape again.

The effects of the breast lift surgery will not be permanent.

## **Pregnancy**

Your breasts will change enormously during pregnancy, and are unlikely to be the same size or shape after pregnancy. Breast-feeding is not possible if the nipple is moved.

## **Weight gain / loss**

If you gain or lose weight, you may also gain or lose weight from your breasts. This will alter their size and shape, even if you have had your previous surgery.

## **What sort of anaesthetic will be given to me?**

You will be given a general anaesthetic. General anaesthesia is drug-induced unconsciousness. It is always provided by an anaesthetist, who is a doctor with specialist training.

Unfortunately, general anaesthesia can cause side effects and complications. Side effects are common, but are usually short-lived: they include nausea, confusion and pain.

Complications are rare, but can cause lasting injury: they include awareness, paralysis and death. The risks of anaesthesia and surgery are lower for those who are undergoing minor surgery, and who are young, fit, active and well.

You will be given an opportunity to discuss anaesthetic options and risks with an anaesthetist before your surgery.

**If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your Consultant or a member of their team.**

### **Getting ready for your operation**

- You will usually be seen in the pre-operative clinic before your operation. Here you will have blood tests, a chest X-ray, and sometimes a heart trace.
- The staff will ask routine questions about your health, the medicine you take at the moment and any allergies you may have.
- A photograph is taken to record the shape and size of your breasts and will be kept as a record.
- If you smoke, it is advised you should stop as soon as you are made aware the operation will be performed. Ask your family (GP) or pre op nurse for advice regarding stopping.

## The day of your operation

- You will come into hospital the day of your operation.
- You will be asked to have nothing to eat or drink at least six hours before your operation.
- The surgeon will see you again and make some marks on your body to help guide the operation.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you understand the procedure, and what the operation involves.
- Again, you will be able to discuss the operation with your surgeon.

## What should I expect after my operation?

- When you return to the ward, you may have a plastic tube coming from your wound site. This tube is to drain fluid from your wound. You may also have a “drip” which is to replace any fluids lost during the procedure.
- A nurse will check your pulse, blood pressure, breathing rate and wound regularly. **It is important that if you feel any pain you must tell the nursing staff, who can give you painkillers to help.**
- The nursing staff will also advise you when you can start taking sips of water. Anaesthetics can make some people sick. If you feel sick we advise you not to drink until this feeling has passed. The nursing staff may offer an injection to help this sick feeling go away.
- **The first time you get out of bed, please make sure you ask a nurse to be with you. This is in case you feel dizzy.**

## **Going Home**

You will usually be in hospital overnight, and discharged the next day.

## **Discharge Information**

### **Pain relief and medication**

The nursing staff will advise you about painkillers before you leave the hospital. Please tell the nurses what painkilling tablets you have at home.

### **Your wound**

- There will be some swelling and bruising after your operation. This will soon settle down.
- Simple tape is all that is needed for the wound dressing. Keep this in place until you are seen in clinic.
- Dissolving stitches will be used and these dissolve within three months.
- Leakage from the scar line often occurs. This is normal and a simple dry dressing is applied to protect your clothes.
- Occasionally, small amounts of suture material come out from the scar line. Please contact your district nurse or clinic.
- Sometimes the wound will pull apart, leaving a red, raw area, which will eventually heal. This may take a number of weeks to do so, and may need dressing from the District Nurse.

### **Getting back to normal**

It is important that you wear a bra at all times for the first month.

We recommend a soft sports bra, as you will be swollen. Your bra should be very supportive and have wide elastic panels. These are necessary to mould the breast tissue into a good shape.

It is for this reason that the bra is worn day and night, only removing it to wash.

You will need measuring for a new bra after your surgery. Many large stores offer this service.

### **General Advice**

- Please do not attempt to lift anything heavy for at least three weeks. Lifting can put pressure on the muscle underneath your breasts.
- Do not drive a car for two to three weeks after your operation. You may find wearing a seatbelt can be uncomfortable.
- You are likely to feel tired after your operation, which is due to the anaesthetic. This is normal. Try to get plenty of rest.
- A healthy, nutritional diet will encourage the healing of scars.
- Stop smoking. Smoking can greatly reduce the rate at which your body can heal. Complications are much less common if you stop smoking.

### **Returning to work**

You can self-certify for the first seven days of sickness. After this, a medical certificate (fit note) may be issued by your hospital doctor or family doctor (GP) to cover the expected time off you will need after being discharged.

## **Further Appointments**

You will be seen back in clinic after your operation.

## **Further Information**

Your Consultant Surgeon or Breast Care Nurses have pictures of patients who have had this type of breast surgery. If you wish to see these pictures or have any other questions, please feel free to ask them.

## **The Breast Care Nurses**

**Tel: 0151 706 2927 (24 hour answerphone)**

**Fax: 0151 706 5901**

## **Breast Cancer Care**

**0808 800 6000 (Freephone)**

## **Macmillan Support Line:**

**Mon to Fri 9am to 8pm**

**Tel: 0808 808 0000 Mon to Fri 9am to 8pm**

**There are many local support groups, please ask your Breast Care Nurse**

**Author: Breast Services, Surgical Directorate**

**Review Date: December 2018**

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