

# **Informed Consent - Reduction Mammoplasty surgery (breast reduction)**

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

This is an informed-consent document that has been prepared to help inform you about reduction mammoplasty surgery (breast reduction), its risks, and alternative treatments.

It is important that you read this information carefully and completely. Please sign the consent for surgery as proposed by your plastic surgeon.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Women who have large breasts may experience a variety of problems from the weight and size of their breasts, such as back, neck, and shoulder pain, and skin irritation. Breast reduction is usually performed for relief of these symptoms rather than to enhance the appearance of the breasts. The best candidates for surgery are those who are mature enough to understand the procedure and have realistic expectations about the results. There are a variety of different surgical techniques used to reduce and reshape the female breast. There are both risks and complications associated with reduction mammoplasty surgery.

## **ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS**

Reduction mammoplasty is an elective surgical operation. Alternative treatment would consist of not undergoing the surgical procedure, physical therapy to treat pain complaints, or wearing undergarments to support large breasts. In selected patients, liposuction has been used to reduce the size of large breasts. Risks and potential complications are associated with alternative surgical forms of treatment.

## **RISKS OF REDUCTION MAMMAPLASTY SURGERY**

Every surgical procedure involves a certain amount of risk and it is important that you understand these risks and the possible complications associated with them. In addition, every procedure has limitations. An individual's choice to undergo a surgical procedure is based on the comparison of the risk to potential benefit. Although the majority of patients do not experience these complications, you should discuss each of them with your plastic surgeon to make sure you understand all possible consequences of reduction mammoplasty.

**Bleeding**- It is possible, though unusual, to experience a bleeding episode during or after surgery. Should post-operative bleeding occur, it may require emergency treatment to drain accumulated blood or blood transfusion. Intra-operative blood transfusion may also be required. Hematoma may contribute to infection or other problems. Do not take any aspirin or anti-inflammatory medications for 2 weeks before or after surgery, as this may increase the risk of bleeding. Non-prescription "herbs" and dietary supplements can increase the risk of surgical bleeding. Hematoma can occur at any time following injury to the breast. If blood transfusions are necessary to treat blood loss, there is the risk of blood-related infections such

as hepatitis and HIV (AIDS). Heparin medications that are used to prevent blood clots in veins can produce bleeding and decreased blood platelets.

**Infection-** Infection is unusual after surgery. Should an infection occur, additional treatment including antibiotics, hospitalization, or additional surgery may be necessary.

**Change in Nipple and Skin Sensation-** You may experience a diminished (or loss) of sensitivity of the nipples and the skin of your breast. Partial or permanent loss of nipple sensation can occur after a reduction mammoplasty in one or both nipples. Nipple sensation may be lost if nipple graft techniques are used for breast reduction. Changes in sensation may affect sexual response or the ability to breast feed a baby. In rare circumstances the nipple may be lost entirely.

**Skin Contour Irregularities-** Contour and shape irregularities may occur after reduction mammoplasty. Visible and palpable wrinkling may occur. One breast may be smaller than the other. Nipple position and shape will not be identical one side to the next. Residual skin irregularities at the ends of the incisions or "dog ears" are always a possibility when there is excessive redundant skin. This may improve with time, or it can be surgically corrected.

**Sutures-** Most surgical techniques use deep sutures. You may notice these sutures after your surgery. Sutures may spontaneously poke through the skin, become visible or produce irritation that requires suture removal.

**Skin Discoloration / Swelling-** Some bruising and swelling normally occurs following a reduction mammoplasty. The skin in or near the surgical site can appear either lighter or darker than surrounding skin. Although uncommon, swelling and skin discoloration may persist for long periods of time and, in rare situations, may be permanent. Additionally, these areas may have exaggerated responses to hot or cold temperatures.

**Skin Sensitivity-** Itching, tenderness, or exaggerated responses to hot or cold temperatures may occur after surgery. Usually this resolve during healing, but in rare situations it may be chronic.

**Scarring-** All surgery leaves scars, some more visible than others. Although good wound healing after a surgical procedure is expected, abnormal scars may occur within the skin and deeper tissues. Scars may be unattractive and of different color than the surrounding skin tone. Scar appearance may also vary within the same scar. Scars may be asymmetrical (appear different on the right and left side of the body). There is the possibility of visible marks in the skin from sutures. In some cases scars may require surgical revision or treatment.

**Damage to Deeper Structures-** There is the potential for injury to deeper structures including nerves, blood vessels, muscles, and lungs (pneumothorax) during any surgical procedure. The potential for this to occur varies according to the type of procedure being performed. Injury to deeper structures may be temporary or permanent.

**Firmness**- Excessive firmness of the breast can occur after surgery due to internal scarring or fat necrosis. The occurrence of this is not predictable. If an area of fat necrosis or scarring appears, this may require biopsy or additional surgical treatment.

**Delayed Healing**- Wound disruption or delayed wound healing is possible. Some areas of the breast skin or nipple region may not heal normally and may take a long time to heal. Areas of skin or nipple tissue may die. This may require frequent dressing changes or further surgery to remove the non-healed tissue. Individuals who have decreased blood supply to breast tissue from past surgery or radiation therapy may be at increased risk for delayed wound healing and poor surgical outcome. **Smokers have a greater risk of skin loss and wound healing complications.**

**Fat Necrosis**- Fatty tissue found deep in the skin might die. This may produce areas of firmness within the skin. Additional surgery to remove areas of fat necrosis may be necessary (breast biopsy). There is the possibility of contour irregularities in the skin that may result from fat necrosis.

**Unsatisfactory Result**- Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained. You may be disappointed with the results of reduction mammoplasty surgery. Asymmetry in nipple location, unanticipated breast shape and size, loss of function, wound disruption, poor healing, and loss of sensation may occur after surgery. Breast size may be incorrect. Unsatisfactory surgical scar location or visible deformities at the ends of the incisions (dog ears) may occur. Lipoplasty may be necessary to thin breast tissue that is outside of the normal surgical location for reduction mammoplasty. It may be necessary to perform additional surgery to attempt to improve your results.

**Asymmetry**- Some breast asymmetry naturally occurs in most women. Differences in terms of breast and nipple shape, size, or symmetry may also occur after surgery. Additional surgery may be necessary to revise asymmetry after a reduction mammoplasty.

**Allergic Reactions**- In rare cases, local allergies to tape, suture material and glues, blood products, topical preparations or injected agents have been reported. Serious systemic reactions including shock (anaphylaxis) may occur in response to drugs used during surgery and prescription medicines. Allergic reactions may require additional treatment.

**Surgical Anesthesia**- Both local and general anesthesia involve risk. There is the possibility of complications, injury, and even death from all forms of surgical anesthesia or sedation.

**Cardiac and Pulmonary Complications**- Surgery, especially longer procedures, may be associated with the formation of, or increase in, blood clots in the venous system. Pulmonary complications may occur secondarily to both blood clots (pulmonary emboli), fat deposits (fat emboli) or partial collapse of the lungs after general anesthesia. Pulmonary emboli can be life-threatening or fatal in some circumstances. Air travel, inactivity and other conditions may increase the incidence of blood clots traveling to the lungs causing a major blood clot that may result in death. It is important to discuss with your physician any past history of blood clots or swollen legs that may contribute to this condition. Cardiac complications are a risk with any

surgery and anesthesia, even in patients without symptoms. Should any of these complications occur, you may require hospitalization and additional treatment. If you experience shortness of breath, chest pains, or unusual heart beats, seek medical attention immediately.

**Seroma**- Fluid accumulations infrequently occur in between the skin and the underlying tissues. Should this problem occur, it may require additional procedures for drainage of fluid.

**Shock**- In rare circumstances, your surgical procedure can cause severe trauma, particularly when multiple or extensive procedures are performed. Although serious complications are infrequent, infections or excessive fluid loss can lead to severe illness and even death. If surgical shock occurs, hospitalization and additional treatment would be necessary.

**Pain**- You will experience pain after your surgery. A breast reduction may not improve complaints of musculoskeletal pain in the neck, back and shoulders. Pain of varying intensity and duration may occur and persist after surgery. Chronic pain may occur very infrequently from nerves becoming trapped in scar tissue after a breast reduction.

**Thrombosed Veins (Mondors)**- Thrombosed veins, which resemble cords, occasionally develop in the area of the breast and resolve without medical or surgical treatment.

### **Additional Advisories Regarding Breast Reduction Surgery**

**Breast Disease**- Breast disease and breast cancer can occur independently of reduction mammoplasty surgery. Individuals with a personal history or family history of breast cancer may be at a higher risk of developing breast cancer than a woman with no family history of this disease. It is recommended that all women perform periodic self-examination of their breasts, have mammography according to American Cancer Society guidelines, and seek professional care should a breast lump be detected. It is extremely rare that an undiagnosed breast cancer would be discovered at the time of a reduction mammoplasty. If this occurs, additional treatment would be necessary.

**Interference with Sentinel Lymph Node Mapping Procedures**- Breast surgery procedures that involve cutting through breast tissue, similar to a breast biopsy, can potentially interfere with diagnostic procedures to determine lymph node drainage of breast tissue to stage breast cancer.

**Breast and Nipple Piercing Procedures**- Individuals who currently wear body-piercing jewelry in the breast region are advised that a breast infection could develop from this activity.

**Breast Feeding**- Although some women have been able to breast feed after breast reduction, in general this is not predictable. If you are planning to breast feed following breast reduction, it is important that you discuss this with your plastic surgeon prior to undergoing reduction mammoplasty.

**Long-Term Results**- Subsequent alterations in breast shape may occur as the result of aging, sun exposure, weight loss, weight gain, pregnancy, menopause, or other circumstances not related to your surgery. Breast sagginess may normally occur.

**Female Patient Information-** It is important to inform your plastic surgeon if you use birth control pills, estrogen replacement, or if you suspect you may be pregnant. Many medications including antibiotics may neutralize the preventive effect of birth control pills, allowing for conception and pregnancy.

**Intimate Relations After Surgery-** Surgery involves coagulating of blood vessels and increased activity of any kind may open these vessels leading to a bleed, or hematoma. Activity that increases your heart rate or blood pressure may cause additional bruising, swelling, and the need for return to surgery and to control bleeding. It is wise to refrain from sexual activity until your physician states it is safe.

**Medications-** There are potential adverse reactions that occur as the result of taking over-the-counter, herbal, and/or prescription medications. Be sure to check with your physician about any drug interactions that may exist with medications which you are already taking. If you have an adverse reaction, stop the drugs immediately and call your plastic surgeon for further instructions. If the reaction is severe, go immediately to the nearest emergency room. When taking the prescribed pain medications after surgery, realize that they can affect your thought process and coordination. Do not drive, do not operate complex equipment, do not make any important decisions and do not drink any alcohol while taking these medications. Be sure to take your prescribed medication only as directed.

**Mental Health Disorders and Elective Surgery-** It is important that all patients seeking to undergo elective surgery have realistic expectations that focus on improvement rather than perfection. Complications or less than satisfactory results are sometimes unavoidable, may require additional surgery and often are stressful. Please openly discuss with your surgeon, prior to surgery, any history that you may have of significant emotional depression or mental health disorders. Although many individuals may benefit psychologically from the results of elective surgery, effects on mental health cannot be accurately predicted.

### **ADDITIONAL SURGERY NECESSARY (Re-Operations)**

There are many variable conditions that may influence the long-term result of reduction mammoplasty. Secondary surgery may be necessary to perform additional tightening or repositioning of the breasts. Should complications occur, additional surgery or other treatments may be necessary. Even though risks and complications occur infrequently, the risks cited are particularly associated with breast reduction surgery. Other complications and risks can occur but are even more uncommon. The practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science. Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained. In some situations, it may not be possible to achieve optimal results with a single surgical procedure.

### **PATIENT COMPLIANCE**

Follow all physician instructions carefully; this is essential for the success of your outcome. It is important that the surgical incisions are not subjected to excessive force, swelling, abrasion, or motion during the time of healing. Personal and vocational activity needs to be restricted.

Protective dressings and drains should not be removed unless instructed by your plastic surgeon. Successful post-operative function depends on both surgery and subsequent care. Physical activity that increases your heart rate or blood pressure may cause bruising, swelling, fluid accumulation and the need for return to surgery. It is wise to refrain from intimate physical activities after surgery until your physician states it is safe. It is important that you participate in follow-up care, return for aftercare, and promote your recovery after surgery.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

Depending on your particular health insurance plan, breast reduction surgery may be considered a covered benefit. There may be additional requirements in terms of the amount of breast tissue to be removed and duration of physical problems caused by large breasts. Breast reductions involving removal of small amounts of tissue may not be covered by your insurance. All breast tissue is sent to pathology for review. Additional cost may be billed to you if your insurance does not cover this testing. Please review your health insurance subscriber-information pamphlet, call your insurance company, and discuss this further with your plastic surgeon. **Many insurance plans exclude coverage for secondary or revisionary surgery.**

## **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The cost of surgery involves several charges for the services provided. The total includes fees charged by your surgeon, the cost of surgical supplies, anesthesia, laboratory tests, and possible outpatient hospital charges, depending on where the surgery is performed. Depending on whether the cost of surgery is covered by an insurance plan, you will be responsible for necessary co-payments, deductibles, and charges not covered. The fees charged for this procedure do not include any potential future costs for additional procedures that you elect to have or require in order to revise, optimize, or complete your outcome. Additional costs may occur should complications develop from the surgery. Secondary surgery or hospital day-surgery charges involved with revision surgery will also be your responsibility. **In signing the consent for this surgery/procedure, you acknowledge that you have been informed about its risk and consequences and accept responsibility for the clinical decisions that were made along with the financial costs of all future treatments.**

## **DISCLAIMER**

Informed-consent documents are used to communicate information about the proposed surgical treatment of a disease or condition along with disclosure of risks and alternative forms of treatment(s), including no surgery. The informed-consent process attempts to define principles of risk disclosure that should generally meet the needs of most patients in most circumstances.

However, informed-consent documents should not be considered all-inclusive in defining other methods of care and risks encountered. Your plastic surgeon may provide you with additional or different information which is based on all the facts in your particular case and the current state of medical knowledge.

Informed-consent documents are not intended to define or serve as the standard of medical care. Standards of medical care are determined on the basis of all of the facts involved in an

individual case and are subject to change as scientific knowledge and technology advance and as practice patterns evolve.

**It is important that you read the above information carefully and have all of your questions answered before signing the consent.**