

# **Informed Consent - Mastopexy (breast lift) Surgery**

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

This is an informed-consent document that has been prepared to help inform you about mastopexy (breast lift) surgery, 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**

Breast lift or mastopexy is a surgical procedure to raise and reshape sagging breasts. Factors such as pregnancy, nursing, weight change, aging and gravity produce changes in the appearance of a woman's breasts. As the skin loses its elasticity, the breasts often lose their shape and begin to sag. Breast lift or mastopexy is a surgery performed by plastic surgeons to raise and reshape sagging breasts. This operation can also reduce the size of the areola, the darker skin around the nipple. If your breasts are small or have lost volume after pregnancy, breast implants inserted in conjunction with mastopexy can increase both firmness and size. The best candidates for mastopexy are healthy, emotionally stable women who have realistic expectations about what this type of surgery can accomplish. Breasts of any size can be lifted, but the results may not last as long in women with heavy, large breasts. Mastopexy does leave permanent, noticeable scars on the breasts, and the breasts will be smaller than your current size. There are a variety of different surgical techniques used for the reshaping and lifting of the female breast.

## **ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS**

Mastopexy is an elective surgical operation. Alternative treatment would consist of not undergoing the surgical procedure or wearing supportive undergarments to lift sagging breasts. If breasts are large and sagging, a reduction mammoplasty may be considered. Risks and potential complications are also associated with alternative surgical forms of treatment.

## **RISKS OF MASTOPEXY 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 mastopexy (breast lift).

**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 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. Individuals with an active infection in their body or weakened immune system should not undergo mastopexy.

**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 and skin sensation can occur after a mastopexy in one or both nipples. Changes in sensation may affect sexual response or the ability to breast feed a baby.

**Breast Augmentation and Simultaneous Mastopexy**- Risks associated with the potential use of breast implants are covered in a separate informed-consent document according to the type of implant selected.

**Mastopexy Performed at the Time of Breast Implant Removal Surgery**- Patients who choose to undergo simultaneous removal of breast implants and capsules and elect to have at the same time a breast lift (Mastopexy) may be at increased risk of necrosis of skin, nipples, and breast tissue due to decreased blood supply to the tissues from earlier surgery. Risks associated with the removal of breast implants are covered in a separate informed-consent document.

**Skin Contour Irregularities**- Contour and shape irregularities may occur after mastopexy. 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 mastopexy. 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.

**Skin Sensitivity**- Itching, tenderness, or exaggerated responses to hot or cold temperatures may occur after surgery. Usually this resolves 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 scarring around a breast implant if one is used. The occurrence of this is not predictable. Additional treatment including surgery may be necessary.

**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 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. There is the possibility of contour irregularities in the skin that may result from fat necrosis.

**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 attempt improvement of asymmetry after a mastopexy.

**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.

**Cardiac and Pulmonary Complications-** 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 swelling in your legs or blood clots 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 pain, or unusual heart beats, seek medical attention immediately.

**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.

**Seroma**- Infrequently, fluid may accumulate between the skin and the underlying tissues following surgery, trauma or vigorous exercise. 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. Pain of varying intensity and duration may occur and persist after mastopexy. Chronic pain may occur very infrequently from nerves becoming trapped in scar tissue or due to tissue stretching.

**Other**- You may be disappointed with the results of surgery. Infrequently, it is necessary to perform additional surgery to improve your results. You may not be able to achieve adequate fullness in your breasts without needing to wear support garments.

### **Additional Advisories Regarding Mastopexy Surgery**

**Breast Disease**- Breast disease and breast cancer can occur independently of breast lift 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.

**Long-Term Results**- Subsequent alterations in the 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.

**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 mastopexy 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 appearance may occur. It may be necessary to perform additional surgery to improve your results.

**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.

**Future Pregnancy and Breast Feeding**- Mastopexy is not known to interfere with pregnancy. If you are planning a pregnancy, your breast skin may stretch and offset the results of mastopexy. You may have more difficulty breast feeding after this operation.

**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 control bleeding. It is wise to refrain from intimate physical activities until your physician states it is safe.

**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.

**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.

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

There are many variable conditions that may influence the long-term result of mastopexy surgery. It is unknown how your breast tissue may respond or how wound healing will occur after surgery. 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 mastopexy 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**

Most health insurance companies exclude coverage for cosmetic surgical operations such as a mastopexy or any complications that might occur from surgery. Please carefully review your health insurance subscriber-information pamphlet. **Most insurance plans exclude coverage for secondary or revisionary surgery** due to complications of cosmetic 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.

