

Patient Information

Breast Reduction

This procedure is offered to patients who have symptoms which can be alleviated by reducing the size of their breasts ie shoulder pain, back ache, posture problems, ill fitting clothes etc.

Benefits of the operation.

Patients who undergo this surgery would see a reduction in their symptoms, as described above.

The operation is a major procedure, so at the time of admission for surgery, you will have to be in good health and at an acceptable surgical weight, which will have been discussed at your outpatient visit.

It is not possible to determine before surgery what the size of your breasts will be after your operation.

If, when you are due to come into hospital, you are unwell, please inform the Consultant's secretary (if it is during the week) or the ward (if it is during the weekend). It is not wise to come in if you are being treated with antibiotics for an infection.

Your stay in hospital will usually be between 4 and 7 days.

Before surgery, you will be examined by one of the medical staff. Investigations may include blood tests, X-rays and clinical photographs.

If the doctor considers that you are not at that time fit for the operation, then you will be allowed home and your operation will be re-booked.

On the day of surgery

- Your surgeon will see you and put markings on your breast/breasts, which you will have to keep on until the time of surgery, as these are the guidelines to your breast reduction.
- You will not be able to have food or drinks; this is in preparation for the long anesthetic. The ward staff will advise you when to stop eating and drinking.
- The anesthetist may discuss the anesthetic, with you prior to surgery.

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- You will be asked to wear surgical stockings and given a blood thinning injection. These are to reduce the risk of blood clots in the vein.
- At the time of surgery, you will be transferred by trolley to theatre, where you will be checked into the theatre anaesthetic room. The anaesthetist will welcome you and give you your anaesthetic.

The operation will last approximately 3 hours. When you wake up, protective dressings will completely cover your breasts. You will have drains (small tubes) coming out of the dressings to drain excess fluids away. There will be a collection bottle on the end of each tube. You will also have a fluid drip in your arm.

There will be some degree of discomfort in your wounds immediately post-operatively, but the nursing and anaesthetic staff will arrange appropriate pain relief.

On the ward, you will have regular checks of your wounds and your general health condition. The drains are checked regularly and when they are removed (usually 2-4 days after the operation) you will usually be allowed home.

Some surgeons use buried sutures, in which case no sutures will need to be removed. Some surgeons use sutures, which may have to be removed.

If you have any questions or problems about your breast surgery please discuss this with the doctor or nurse.

Risks and problems associated with breast reduction

As previously discussed at the clinic and at the time of consent, you are warned about various problems:

- It is a major procedure. There may be problems from the general anaesthetic itself, which do not occur very often, but can be serious if they do. These vary from mild chest infections, through to blood clots in the leg veins and worse (which is very rare) blood clots breaking off and going to the lungs. These are the reasons that you need to be in good health for the operation and at an acceptable weight for surgery, as they reduce these risks considerably.
- Smoking can adversely affect healing of wounds. You should stop smoking from the time that you are put on the waiting list. Your GP will be able to offer support and advice.
- The scar pattern will have been discussed with you. Scars can heal in many ways, anything from a smooth pink scar, which fades to a pale colour, up to a lumpy, ugly, purple, itchy scar, which is not very common. These lumpy types of scar usually settle with massage and time.
- Any surgical operation can be prone to bleeding – this may need a blood transfusion, or rarely a second operation to stop bleeding and remove the blood clot.

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- Infection can occur in any wound, but is uncommon. Very rarely, severe infections can cause skin loss, which may even lead to the need for skin grafting procedures.
- The nipple has to be transferred from its current site to a new site. Loss of sensitivity may occur. Rarely, part or the entire nipple may be lost.
- Very occasionally, when buried sutures have been used and if you have not absorbed these, they may come through the wound and simply need to be snipped off, either by your surgeon or your general practitioner.
- In some patients who have a difference in size and shape of their breasts, it is not possible to obtain exact symmetry of breasts following surgery. It is not possible to determine what size your breasts will be after your operation.
- For a few months after the operation, you may have firm, tender areas in your breasts, also odd stabbing pains.
- Breast-feeding may not always be possible following breast surgery.
- Occasionally, the condition may recur, especially if the operation is performed before your breast development is complete or you become pregnant.
- Occasionally, there may be a need for secondary surgical procedure to treat complications or improve the shape or symmetry of the breasts.

Recovery from this procedure is variable; you are usually able to start normal household activities four to five weeks after the operation.

Returning to work will depend on your occupation. Your doctor will advise you.

Following the procedure, the surgeon may advise you to wear a bra day and night for the first six or eight weeks. The bra type should be a good supporting bra, as advised by the ward nursing staff.

Before leaving hospital, an outpatient appointment will be arranged for you.

Further Information

Please ring the plastic surgery ward
Russells Hall Hospital - 01384 244282

You may also wish to access the Department of Health Website which offers further information and advice regarding plastic surgery.

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Policyandguidance/Healthandsocialcaretopics/CosmeticSurgery

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