

10

THINGS YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT LIFE
WITH BREAST IMPLANTS

Welcome to life with breast implants!

Now that you've had breast surgery, it is especially important to stay on top of your breast health. This guide will help you navigate breast health milestones, lifestyle changes, and other topics of interest in your life with breast implants. While your plastic surgeon should always be your first resource for important questions, you may find this guide helpful in answering some common questions and concerns.

Remember

- 1 ASK YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON FOR A COPY OF YOUR OPERATION REPORT.
- 2 KEEP ALL BREAST IMPLANT-RELATED DOCUMENTS IN A SAFE PLACE.
- 3 REFER BACK TO THIS INFORMATION IN THE FUTURE.

#1 Your plastic surgeon is your new best friend

Your plastic surgeon is the best resource for reliable information about breast implants. As you will be returning for follow-up care in the weeks and months after surgery, remember to inform your plastic surgeon's office if your contact information changes.

Name of plastic surgeon:

Date of surgery:

Implant model:

Implant serial number(s):

Left: _____

Right: _____

A woman with her hair in a ponytail, wearing a black sports bra, black shorts with white trim, and white sneakers, is running on a sandy beach. She is wearing white earbuds and has a white backpack strap visible. The background shows the ocean and a clear blue sky.

#2

You can still get your daily dose of endorphins

After surgery, ask your surgeon when you can begin exercising and about any precautions you should take. Once fully recovered and cleared for exercise, most patients may return to an active lifestyle. Understand where your implants are placed, behind the chest muscle or in front. Be cautious during any activity that puts pressure on your breasts or while doing strenuous

exercises. Wear a supportive bra and listen to your body; if an exercise causes swelling or discomfort, stop and notify your surgeon. Talk to your plastic surgeon about your new exercise routine or if you have any questions about certain activities. If you experience pain, contact your plastic surgeon right away.

#3

Your breasts' appearance may change

The breasts contain fatty tissue and may respond to changes in your body similarly to how they may have responded prior to breast implants.

Factors that may affect the size/shape of your breasts:

- > Weight loss
- > Weight gain
- > Pregnancy
- > Breastfeeding
- > Aging and the effects of gravity/loss of skin elasticity



A close-up photograph of a pink bra with white polka dots and lace trim, positioned on the left side of the page. The background is a light blue textured surface.

#4 Breast implants

do not prevent women with implants from getting accurate mammograms

Women with breast implants are still able to have mammograms, though it may be more difficult. Women should ask to have their mammography exams performed and interpreted at centres experienced in the evaluation of women with breast implants. Other breast screening exams, such as ultrasound and MRI, can also be performed when necessary.



#5 You may be curious about nursing with implants

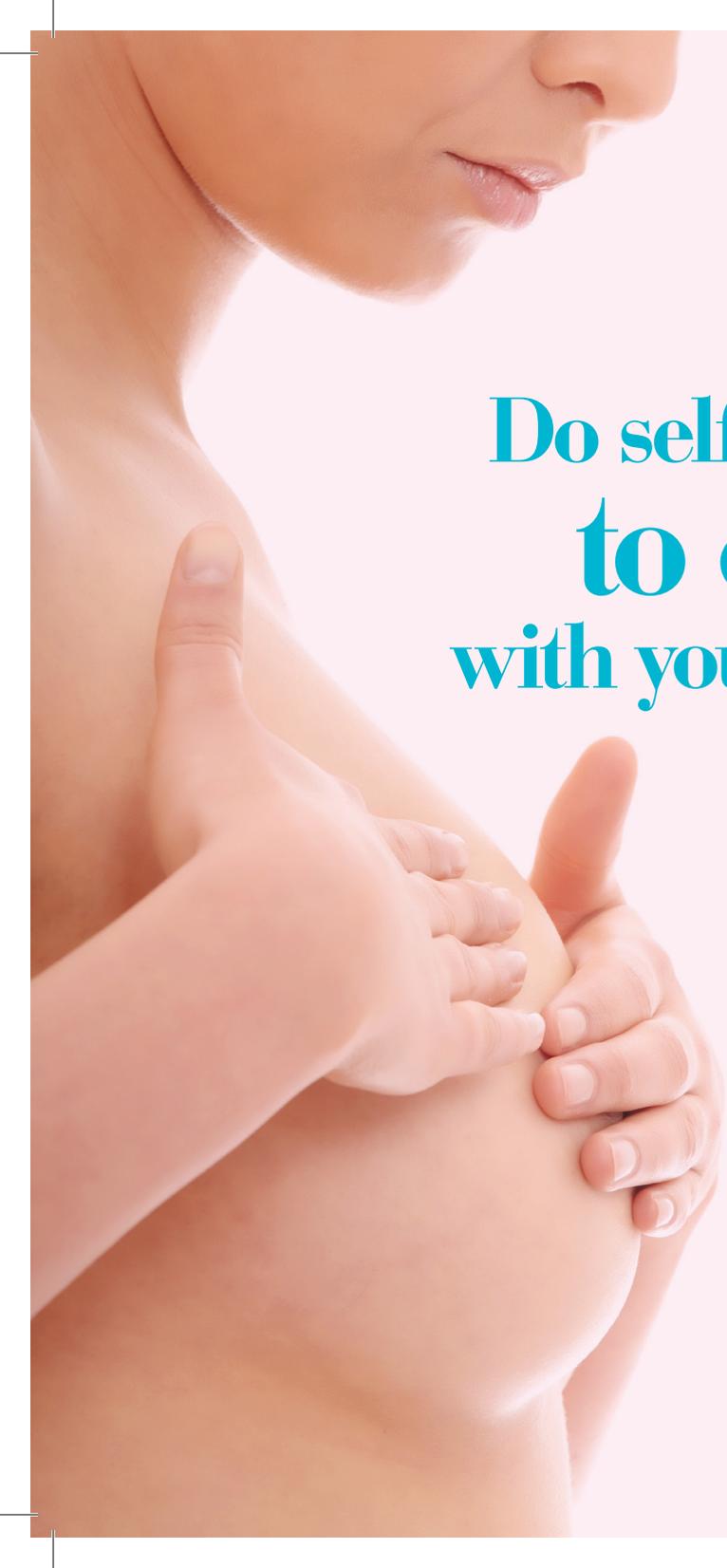
Talk to your plastic surgeon, gynecologist, or lactation nurse if you have questions about breastfeeding with implants.

Note: For breast augmentation patients only.

- › Breast implants may affect your ability to breastfeed either by reducing or eliminating milk production
- › Breastfeeding difficulties have been reported following breast surgery, including breast reduction and breast augmentation
- › A periareolar surgical approach may further increase the chance of breastfeeding difficulties

Every woman's
experience may be different.





#6

Do self-exams often to check in with your breasts

You will need to learn the new feel of your breasts with implants. It is possible that you could feel the edge of your implant. If you had a mastectomy for breast cancer, a breast-lifting procedure, or a reduction, your breast will feel different. You need to learn your “new normal” so you will be aware of any changes.

Women are encouraged to perform a monthly self-exam for breast cancer, no matter their age.

With breast implants, self-examinations for breast cancer may feel different. Ask your doctor to help you distinguish the implant from your breast tissue.

#7 Get your breasts checked regularly by a professional

Health Canada and the Canadian Expert Advisory Panel on silicone gel-filled breast implants advocate the following approach to monitor patients with breast implants. In consideration of all the available scientific information, it has been suggested that the process for determining implant integrity (e.g., rupture) should be related to clinical signs and symptoms.

The following 6-step process is recommended for screening silicone gel-filled breast implant ruptures:

- 1 PERFORMING REGULAR SELF-EXAMINATIONS
- 2 LOOKING OUT FOR ANY NEW SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE
- 3 GETTING REGULAR PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS BY YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER AND IN THE EVENT THAT YOU NOTICE ANY ABNORMALITIES ON YOUR BREASTS
- 4 YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER MAY SUGGEST GETTING AN ULTRASOUND, MAMMOGRAM, OR BOTH
- 5 AN MRI MAY BE REQUIRED IF YOUR ULTRASOUND IS NEGATIVE OR INCONCLUSIVE
- 6 CONSULT YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON IF YOU NEED THE IMPLANTS TO BE REMOVED OR REPLACED

TIP

Ask your surgeon to send a letter about your operation details to your family doctor or healthcare provider. This will let them know if any future changes to your health are related to your surgery. They will know what signs and symptoms to look for if you experience any health issues.

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing glasses and a black lace top, is lying on a bed and looking at her smartphone. The background is a bright, softly lit room with white curtains.

#8 You may develop an implant-related condition

Breast implants are not a lifetime device, and breast implantation is not necessarily a one-time surgery.

Potential implant-related conditions

- **CAPSULAR CONTRACTURE:** A capsule is connective tissue that normally forms around any device as a reaction to its presence in your body. Capsular contracture occurs when the normal capsule tightens up and squeezes the implant. This can make the implant feel firmer, distort the appearance of the breast, and can be painful
- **BREAST IMPLANT-ASSOCIATED ANAPLASTIC LARGE CELL LYMPHOMA (BIA-ALCL):** Individuals with breast implants have a risk of developing breast implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma (BIA-ALCL). BIA-ALCL is not breast cancer—it is a type of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (cancer of the immune system). In most cases, BIA-ALCL is found in the scar tissue and fluid near the implant, but in some cases, it can spread throughout the body. In the cases that it has spread beyond the scar tissue and fluid near the implant, rare cases of death have been reported

Health Canada recognizes a higher risk of BIA-ALCL with implants having a textured surface, especially those with a more highly textured surface as opposed to implants with a smoother surface

If you have breast implants, there is no need to change your routine medical care and follow-up. If you notice changes in the way your breasts look and feel after you recover from surgery, including swelling or pain around your breast implants, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about the possibility of BIA-ALCL

For additional information on Health Canada's safety review of BIA-ALCL and breast implants, please visit <https://hpr-rps.hres.ca/reg-content/summary-safety-review-detail.php?lang=en&linkID=SSR00223>

- **IMPLANT RUPTURE:** Implants are not lifetime devices. A rupture can occur when the shell of the implant develops a tear or hole. The longer the implants are in place, the higher the chance of rupture. Most gel ruptures occur without symptoms and are best detected by MRI
- **SEROMA:** A seroma is a collection of fluid that occurs in the body after a surgical procedure or trauma. It can occur early after surgery or many years later. It presents as swelling in the breast, bruising, can be painful, and may be accompanied by fever. If this occurs contact your surgeon for evaluation

These and other breast implant-related complications may arise after your surgery. Talk to your surgeon if you experience any changes to the look or feel of your breasts. Some of these changes may include pain, swelling, lumps in your breast or armpit, tingling, hardening, or changes in sensation.

FYI

Early diagnosis and treatment are key to a good outcome.

#9 Your implants may be covered

Most breast implants come with a manufacturer warranty. Coverage varies across manufacturers, and many include free and automatic enrolment. Check with your plastic surgeon to find out what kind of coverage you have.



#10 Your implants will not last forever

Breast implants are not lifetime devices, and breast implantation is not a one-time surgery.

The longer you have your implants, the more likely you will need them removed or replaced.

Breasts change with time, pregnancy, weight gain or loss, and hormonal changes. Your plastic surgeon is your best resource for recommending procedures that fit your lifestyle and aesthetic goals.



Be your own breast advocate

Is it time to check in with your breasts?

LAST FOLLOW-UP VISIT: _____

LAST FOLLOW-UP VISIT: _____



Routinely examine your breasts so you know if there are changes.



See your healthcare provider regularly for exams and sooner if you notice any changes.



Follow the Canadian Cancer Society's guidelines for mammograms.



If you move, contact your healthcare provider's office with your new address and ask for recommendations for a healthcare provider in your new location.



Don't take no for an answer. If you have a concern that you feel has not been appropriately addressed, get a second opinion.

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CA-NAT-2150010

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