

Breast Reduction

This is an operation that is used to surgically reduce the size and volume of the breasts. The operation is performed under general anaesthesia and the entire procedure from start to finish takes about 3 hours.

When you wake up after the operation you will usually have a drain placed under each arm. This is to drain any blood or fluid that may collect there after surgery. This will leave a small scar when they are removed. In addition you will have a dressing over your breasts. Sometimes we use a bra to hold these dressings in place or we place a surgical binder over the breasts to give support and comfort.

As the operation is three hours long, you may feel quite drowsy and nauseous (sick) afterwards. I recommend that you only have small amounts of food and fluid initially. You will be able to walk around the room later on the day of your operation. Most patients have their drains removed the following day and then they are discharged, if they are well enough to go home.

The dressings are removed after one week and if there are stitches around the nipple then these are removed then too. If there are other stitches that need to be removed then these are done between 2-3 weeks post-operatively. Sometimes we use dissolving stitches and then they do not need to be removed.

You should expect there to be bruising on the breasts and on your tummy. This bruising takes 3-4 weeks to fade. The wound at the breast fold (where the vertical and transverse scars meet) often does not heal properly and you may need to have dressings for about 4-6 weeks following your operation. This is a problematic area because of the tension that is on the skin in that area. It is usually possible for you to return to work after about 2 weeks, however you may feel very tired and lethargic as a result of the general anaesthetic and this can take 2-3 months to resolve, depending on your age and fitness.

The other potential complications from this type of operation are the appearance of the scars which may be thick and unsightly, the risk of nipple necrosis (this is when the skin of the nipple does not heal due to lack of blood supply and becomes a scab), the loss of sensation and nipple erection and the inability to breast feed. All these risks vary greatly depending on the individual patient and the size of the reduction.

Wound complications are very common in people who smoke tobacco and so the operation cannot be done on smokers. I generally advise a period of at least three months of no smoking before having breast reduction surgery.

Sometimes patients require minor corrective procedures at the ends of the scars and this is usually done after 6-12 months. There is no surgical fee for this, but there will be a hospital fee. In most cases this corrective surgery is done under a local anaesthesia, but if a general anaesthetic is required there will be a fee set by the Consultant Anaesthetist.

- **We would ask you not to take any herbal or over the counter medicines prior to having a surgical procedure. Many Homeopathic chemists advocate arnica before surgery however this is quite harmful as it causes more bleeding during surgery.**
- **You will be given antibiotics during your surgery. Do remember that for women using the oral contraceptive, this will be less effective as a result of taking antibiotics, especially the oral ones. You will need an alternative form of contraception whilst taking the antibiotics and for seven days afterwards.**

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