

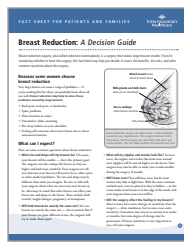
# Breast Reduction: *Preparing for Surgery*

## What is breast reduction and why is it done?

Breast reduction, also called **reduction mammoplasty**, is a surgery that makes large breasts smaller. The goal is to relieve pain or solve problems caused by very large breasts.

In breast reduction, the surgeon removes extra fat, breast tissue, and skin to make each breast smaller. The nipples and **areolas** (the dark areas around the nipples) are usually moved higher, and the breasts are reshaped so they are higher and look more youthful.

If you're trying to decide whether to have this surgery, the Intermountain fact sheet titled **Breast Reduction: A Decision Guide** can help you think through your choice.



## How do I prepare?

- **You'll meet with the surgeon to discuss the plan for the surgery.** This is your chance to ask any questions you may have.
- **You'll have a physical exam and talk about your health history.** The exam may include blood tests and other tests as needed. You should have a mammogram if you are over 40 and haven't had one in the last year. Tell your surgeon if:
  - You're pregnant, you think you might be pregnant, or you're breastfeeding
  - You or a close relative has had breast cancer or any other breast condition
  - You've had breast surgery
  - You have any general health problems
  - You've had an allergy or other bad reaction to anesthesia, latex, or any medicines

## Talking with your surgeon about breast reduction surgery

The table below lists the most common potential benefits, risks, and alternatives for breast reduction surgery. There may be other benefits or risks in your unique medical situation. Talking with your surgeon is the most important part of learning about these risks and benefits.

Potential benefits	Risks and potential complications	Alternatives
<p><b>Benefits of smaller breasts</b> can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less back or neck pain</li> <li>• Less discomfort while exercising</li> <li>• Feeling more confident</li> <li>• Wearing clothes you want to wear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Risks that are possible with any surgery.</b> These are uncommon. They include infection, blood clots, allergic reaction to anesthesia or medication, bleeding during or after surgery, and extremely small risk of a stroke or heart attack during surgery.</li> <li>• <b>Changes in breast sensitivity.</b> Breasts may be less sensitive, or in some cases, more sensitive. These changes can be permanent. The "free nipple graft" method removes all sensitivity. Ask your surgeon if you have questions.</li> <li>• <b>Change in your ability to breastfeed.</b> The surgery may affect breastfeeding. The "free nipple graft" method always prevents you from breastfeeding. Check with your surgeon if you have any questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercises to strengthen your stomach or back</li> <li>• Losing weight</li> <li>• A support bra with padded straps</li> <li>• Ointments or creams for skin problems</li> </ul>

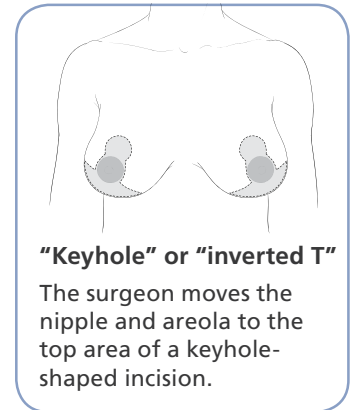
- **Make a list of all the medicines you take.** Be sure to list ALL prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines (cough syrup or allergy pills, for example) you take. Also include vitamins and herbal supplements. You may have to stop taking them for a period of time before the surgery. It's important that your healthcare team has a complete list so they can tell you which pills to stop taking and when.
- **Stop smoking at least 4 weeks before the surgery.** Smoking keeps wounds from healing well and increases your chance of infection and skin death. Ask your doctor about medicines and other aids to help you quit.
- **Arrange for a responsible adult to stay with you.** This person will need to drive you to and from the surgery and stay with you for the first 24 hours (1 day) after your surgery.
- **Follow your surgeons' directions about eating and drinking before surgery.** This is very important. If you do not follow instructions, you may not be able to have the surgery that day. If your surgeon says you can take a pill the day of surgery, take it with just a sip of water.
- **Bring a comfortable shirt that opens in the front and shoes that are easy to put on.** This will make it easier for you to get dressed when you're ready to go home.

## What happens the day of surgery?

Breast reduction surgery usually takes several hours. In general, here's what to expect:

- **The surgeon will mark each breast, based on your surgery plan.**

- **You'll have general anesthesia.** This is medicine that puts you into a deep sleep. You will not feel anything or remember the surgery.
- **The surgeon will make cuts along the markings and remove extra fat, breast tissue, and skin.** The surgeon will move the nipple and areola so they are higher on the breast. The rest of the skin will be brought in around the areola to form a smaller breast. The picture shows a common method. Your surgeon may use a different method.



- **The surgeon may place a soft tube in each breast to drain fluids.** The incisions will be closed with stitches, surgical tape, or glue. Your breasts will be wrapped in gauze and you'll have an elastic bandage.
- **You'll spend time in recovery until you're ready to go home.** You may need to stay in the hospital overnight.

## How should I care for myself at home?

How well you follow your doctor's instructions often determines how well you heal. Recovery after breast reduction surgery usually takes around 1 to 2 weeks. At that time, you may be able to return to light activity at work or school.



When you're ready to go home, your nurse will give you a set of instructions. You may receive the Intermountain fact sheet ***Breast Reduction: Recovery at home***. This fact sheet explains what you need to do.

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