

A Patient's Guide to Breast Augmentation

When considering breast augmentation, there are many factors that one must take into account. There are several issues that need to be discussed with your Plastic Surgeon during the time of consultation. There are also many questions that you, as the patient, should ask your plastic surgeon. In this book, we will go over the pertinent issues your plastic surgeon will discuss with you at the time of your consultation and also questions that you should ask of your plastic surgeon at that time.

The first and sometimes most difficult part of this process is finding a qualified plastic surgeon. How do you find the right plastic surgeon? Should you ask a friend or look in the phone book? What about someone who has a big advertisement in a magazine? There are many common mistakes that people make in the search for a surgeon, and there are steps that you can take to make sure the plastic surgeon you choose has the proper credentials, qualifications and experience.

The first mistake is not actually seeing a real Plastic Surgeon. Unfortunately in today's health care environment, many physicians and surgeons are trying to increase their shrinking incomes by offering plastic surgery procedures to patients. Some dermatologists, general surgeons, ear, nose and throat surgeons, OB/GYN's and even dentists are attempting to do plastic surgery. In most states, there are no laws to prevent this, so it is up to you, the patient, to research the doctor's credentials. In order to make sure you are seeing a real plastic surgeon, this person must have completed a residency in plastic and reconstructive surgery. This is a two or three-year process that also follows two or three years of training in general surgery. They need to have graduated from a program (preferably in the United States) that is accredited and allows board certification. What if your surgeon of choice did not go to school in the United States or is not American trained? In general, medical schools and training programs outside of the United States are not of the same high quality and caliber as those in the United States. There are exceptions, of course, but as a general rule, I view foreign credentials as being lesser than those acquired in the United States.

What about board certification?

Board certification is absolutely critical when finding the right plastic surgeon. There is only one medical board in the United States that is allowed to certify plastic surgeons and this is the American Board of Plastic Surgery. There are no other boards that are legitimate and can certify a plastic surgeon. There are other similarly sounding organizations that some physicians and entrepreneurs have formed that claim to give board certification to people doing plastic surgery. But unless it is the American Board of Plastic Surgery, it is not a legitimate plastic surgery board. Unfortunately in the attempt to "cash in" if you will on plastic surgery, many non plastic surgeons have formed groups with similarly-sounding names in a blatant attempt to confuse the public into choosing a non plastic surgeon for their plastic surgery procedures. Only plastic surgeons can call themselves plastic surgeons legally. However, many medical doctors who are trying to

do plastic surgery will use other names such as “cosmetic surgeon”. This term has no legal or medical definition, and hence, anybody can use it. Also, there are people who claim to be specialists in “aesthetic medicine”. Again, this term has no legal or medical definition. So anybody can use it. Only plastic surgeons can call themselves plastic surgeons. So when your surgeon has finished many years of training in the accredited program, he or she must then pass difficult written and oral examinations given by leaders in the field of plastic surgery. Only after they pass these examinations can they claim to be board certified. And again the only board in the United States that can certify plastic surgeons is the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

If you wish to check to see if your plastic surgeon is certified, you can go to this link at www.abplsurg.org, type in the surgeon’s name, and their certification status will appear. This is a free website open to the public, and it is one that I highly encourage you to use.

The third mistake that people make when trying to find a plastic surgeon is choosing one even when things “don’t feel right”. Even after checking credentials, getting recommendations from friends, and having a one-on-one consultation with the plastic surgeon, if you are just not comfortable with him or her, you should get another opinion. Sometimes things just do not feel right, and you do not know why. Maybe you felt the consultation was rushed, and you did not have an opportunity to ask all of your questions. Perhaps the office appeared dirty or disorganized. Perhaps the personnel in the office were not as open and friendly as you expected. You should always trust your instincts. See other plastic surgeons. Go to another consultation until you find the one who is qualified and makes you feel comfortable and at ease. Remember, you as the patient have the final word in who operates on you and which procedures are done. Make sure your surgeon understands your desires and expresses confidence that he or she can deliver the results you have discussed. Do not be afraid to ask about credentials or research them. We as plastic surgeons are very proud of our training, and we are happy to share our credentials with you. And do not hesitate to seek a second opinion if you are not satisfied with the first.

Is breast augmentation right for you?

That is a question that only you can answer, but let me talk about some of the reasons why people who are happy with breast augmentation have had it done. Breast augmentation is a procedure that is a personal choice. It should be your choice alone. If you are being coerced into having the procedure, you will probably not be as happy with the outcome. Only if this is truly your decision will you feel that it was the right decision for you.

If you are having breast augmentation because you feel inadequate or insecure about your size, this procedure will make you feel better about yourself. Maybe your breasts just never quite developed. Or perhaps they did develop but time and pregnancies have taken away what you once had. Then these are good reasons to have the procedure performed. Breast augmentation can certainly give you larger breasts where you have never had any

before, and it can also restore much of the volume and shape that time or pregnancy has taken away. And if these are your goals, then breast augmentation will most likely make you happy.

However, if your goal for breast augmentation is to make your boyfriend or husband pay more attention to you or if your goal for breast augmentation is to impress other people rather than yourself, you may be in for a disappointment. Others may not always react to changes the way you would like them to react. The real reason to have this, or any plastic surgery procedure, is because it is what YOU truly want. Your plastic surgeon should discuss motivation with you, and do not be hesitant to share these with your plastic surgeon during the time of the consultation.

How should a breast implant be placed into the patient?

There are many ways of placing breast implants into patients. I, as a plastic surgeon, have done them all, and have decided what I recommend for most patients. However, that is a choice that must be discussed between you and your plastic surgeon and agreed upon based upon your individual situation, your desires and goals.

The most common way of placing a breast implant is by making a small incision usually between 1-2 inches in length in the fold underneath the breasts. This is called the inframammary fold. This incision generally heals well and is away from most major nerves. It allows the incision to be placed in an area that is not readily seen, even with the clothes off. It is also well hidden by bras and bathing suits. For this reason is the most commonly performed incision for breast augmentation in the United States.

Another way of putting in a breast implant is by making a small incision around the underside of nipple area. The surgeon makes an incision underneath the portion of the nipple where the dark skin called the areola joins the light skin. This heals very well in most people and also gives adequate access for the surgeon in placing the implant. I have found the downside to this type of incision is that there are many nerves in the area going to the nipple areolar complex, and sometimes those nerves can be damaged and leaving you with an area of numbness after the procedure. Usually the nerves grow back, and feeling returns, but sometimes it does not. If the nerves around the incision do not grow back you could be left with a numb or partially numb nipple forever. If you choose this type of incision, this is a risk that you should discuss with your surgeon. Ask about numbness and the possibilities of this after breast augmentation.

Another way of putting the implant in is by making an incision in the armpit area, or the axilla, and placing it from this incision into the breast. There are many skilled surgeons who perform this operation. However, it is a more difficult procedure. It generally takes more time to do in the operating room and sometimes the scars heal a little thicker thus are more noticeable than someone might like. Even though the incision is in the armpit, thick scars can be noticeable and uncomfortable. Also, it is difficult to place larger implants through this incision so it may be best reserved for those who wish to have smaller implants or a type of implant called a saline implant. Again, the incision is best

discussed with your surgeon. The best incision is different for different people under different circumstances.

What type of implants are available and what type is best?

This depends upon you, the patient, and your goals. There are basically three types of implants on the market today in the United States. All have been approved by the FDA for use in adult women. All have undergone extensive testing and safety studies both in the United States and Europe. These are the saline implants, the cohesive gel implant, and the “gummy bear” implant.

The first implant and the oldest implant that is on the market today is called a saline implant. A saline implant has an outer shell made of a substance called silastic, and the inside is filled by your surgeon at the time of breast augmentation with IV fluid, hence the name saline. The only thing inside of it is IV fluid. These implants have been used in the United States for over 30 years. They have a very long and good safety record. However, the saline implants have one flaw – eventually they will leak and need to be replaced. They will last on average perhaps 12-15 years. Some people have leaks that happen much sooner than this. Some people have leaks that happen much later than this. But eventually a saline implant will leak.

What happens when a saline implant leaks? It simply deflates, and the body absorbs the saline, and the breasts become uneven because the implant that has leaked will look smaller and perhaps be wrinkled and feel softer to the touch. It is a straight-forward matter to remove the leaking implant and to replace it with a new one. However, this does require a second surgical procedure.

Saline implants also tend to feel harder than the newer gel (silicone) implants. They also tend to ripple around the edges. You can usually feel ripples at the edge of a saline implant and sometimes you can even see these ripples. All implants have pluses and minuses. These differences make it critical that you discuss all type of implants in depth with your plastic surgeon. You and your surgeon should then agree on the best type of implant for you.

The newer implants used most commonly now in the United States are called cohesive gel implants. These are silicone implants but there is no liquid in them to leak. The older silicone implants that were taken off of the market in the 1990’s had liquid silicone that could leak out. These newer FDA approved implants are not liquid but they feel like they are. The advantage of the cohesive gel implant is that it feels softer than the saline implant, and it does not ripple as much around the edges as do the saline implants. The other long-term advantage is that although these implants have only been used in the United States for about 10 years, they have a longer track record in Europe and South America, and these implants have been shown to last 20-30 years which is much longer than a saline implant will last. In addition, these implants have not liquid in them to leak which was why the old liquid silicone implants were taken off the market in the 1990’s

So these have a very long worldwide track record of safety and last on average a lot longer than do the saline implants. Again, it is very important to discuss choice of style and size of implant with your plastic surgeon.

The newer type of implant that is approved by the FDA for use in adult women is called a highly cohesive gel or sometimes referred to as a gummy bear implant. It is just as you would imagine. A gummy bear implant is a solid silicone implant that feels soft like a gummy bear but has no liquid in it, and it in fact is a solid. The gummy bear implants mostly come in a shaped variety that is they are not a round implant but a teardrop-shape implant. For many people the shape of this implant could be a problem. These can make the breasts look a little sagging and not as full in the cleavage area as many women who are seeking breast augmentation desire.

The shape of the implant whether they are saline, gel or gummy bear is also a concern and is an important factor that must be discussed with your plastic surgeon. Most implants placed in the United States are round implants because they give augmentation in the cleavage or the upper part of the breast as well as the lower part of the breast. Most women nowadays desire that fuller look in the cleavage, and that is one that is achieved with a round implant. However, there are other options that may be discussed or may be suggested by your surgeon depending on how you are built and your goals. So be sure to discuss this with him or her at the time of your consultation.

Where should this surgical procedure to be done?

For breast augmentation to be successful, it must be done in a sterile manner to avoid any types of infection. It is also best done with an anesthesiologist present to ensure your comfort and safety while the surgeon performs the procedure. My preference and my belief is that this is a procedure that is best performed in a fully accredited outpatient surgery center operating room as opposed to an office. Having said that, however, there are many physicians who have their own attached ambulatory surgery center to their office, and these are fully accredited and very safe and can be an excellent choice for people to have surgery in a convenient and discreet manner.

If your surgeon suggests that you have your procedure done in an outpatient surgery center that is fine. If your surgeon suggests that you have your procedure done in an office-based surgery center, then there are some other questions that you must ask. First, is the office-base surgery center accredited by JCAH or another similar accredited body? They should have a certificate that shows accreditation if they are. Second, who is doing your anesthesia while the surgeon is operating? What type of anesthesia will you be getting? You want to make sure that you are being administered anesthesia by a fully-trained anesthesiologist or anesthesiologist, and the type of anesthesia varies based on surgeon and patient preference.

Usually patients are placed under a light general anesthesia for a breast augmentation procedure. These are short-acting medications that anesthesiologists use.

They wear off very quickly after the procedure so you wake up and do not remember anything of the operation. However, it is also possible to do this under sedation anesthesia in which you are not quite completely asleep like you are under a general anesthetic. However, you are very sedated and comfortable because of the pain medication that is also used. You will remember some of the procedure if you are under sedation anesthesia. So the choice of types of anesthesia must also be discussed between you, your plastic surgeon and the person performing the anesthetic portion of the operation.

This leads us to recovery and restrictions after breast augmentation surgery.

Again, please ask your specific surgeon for these restrictions because they may be different depending on technique used and of course depending on what job you have and the physical demands of your job and lifestyle. For most people full recovery to unrestricted activity, even strenuous activity, takes about one month. Many plastic surgeons will have you wear sports bras day and night for one month before going into other types of bras.

After one month, I allow my patients to wear any bra they want including underwires or go without if they choose. And they would not have to sleep in a bra after one month. For one month after surgery, there would be no strenuous exercise and no weightlifting. Walking is acceptable exercise but nothing in a gym, no jogging, nothing that would bounce you up and down for an entire month. After one month I release restrictions and allow people to exercise and to begin to jog or to lift weights while wearing a good sports bra at the time.

Amount of time off work?

This depends upon the physical demands of your job. Many people who have a desk job where you are working with the telephone or computer could go back to work within a week very comfortably. However, if your job is always being on your feet all day or carrying heavy objects around or working with your hands and arms, it may be longer. In fact, for some people with a strenuous job they may require a month off work.

When do you see the final results of a breast augmentation? For most people, that is after two or three months. Initially when you look in the mirror, your breasts will be swollen. They will feel firm to the touch, and they will look rather round; they will not necessarily be in the shape of a breast. However, over the next several weeks and months, the implants will soften. The swelling goes away. As the skin relaxes and possibly the muscles relaxes also, they take a more natural shape, and the incision heals and loses a lot of its redness. This, however, is a process that really does take a few months to see your final result.

Finally, how long can you expect these implants to last? We touched on this earlier that the saline implants probably last on average 12-15 years before they will leak. But

the newer gel and gummy bear implants should last much longer than that and if they were to slowly wear out, what happens is the outer shell becomes a little rough with time and degradation, and the body would then form a scar capsule around it, and your implant would become firm or hard. Remember, with the newer gel implants there is no liquid to leak and no overall health dangers. However, the implant will become firmer than before, and that will be an indication that something is happening, and it should be looked at by a plastic surgeon.

Mammograms

All women should have mammograms as you get older based on your family history and your OB/GYN's recommendations. Having breast implants does not change this. All implants today are made with mammograms in mind. A good mammographer who is accustomed to doing mammograms with implants should have no problem performing your mammogram. It is important, however, to tell them prior to having a mammogram that you do have the implants in place because they use a slightly different technique in order to visualize breast tissue so this is important for them to know. And again, I tell people begin their mammogram schedule as they would if they did not have breast implants. It is safe to have a mammogram three months after augmentation surgery.

At the beginning, we talked about how to find a qualified plastic surgeon. At the end, I am putting a downloadable link that will allow you to print out a guide to questions you should ask at the time of a consultation for this or any plastic surgery procedure to make sure that you have a qualified plastic surgeon. This guide is called "Beautiful by Choice", and it can be downloaded at www.ohioplasticsurgeons.com. Or you may print the version that begins on the next page. Also at that website, you may contact me personally through email with any questions you have. I answer all of my emails and would be happy to answer any questions you have about breast augmentation or other plastic surgery procedures.

Thank you.

Steven L. Robinson, M.D.

BEAUTIFUL BY CHOICE

The guide to finding a qualified Plastic Surgeon

Download and print this booklet.

Take it with you for your Plastic Surgery consultation

Fill in the blanks and make the best choice for you

Steven Robinson, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Ohio Plastic Surgeons, Inc.

www.ohioplasticsurgeons.com

Ckeck-List For Finding The Right Plastic Surgeon

1. Is your Surgeon board certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS)?

This is the only board recognized as having the authority to certify Plastic Surgeons in America. The certification process is rigorous and involves completing an accredited training program, then passing oral and written examinations. You can easily contact the ABPS and ask if a surgeon is board certified by calling (215) 587-9322 or visiting www.abplsurg.org.

Board certified? YES _____ NO _____

2. Is Your Surgeon a Member Of The American Society For Aesthetic Plastic Surgery? (ASAPS)

Membership in this prestigious society means that your surgeon is a board certified Plastic Surgeon who has been recognized by his or her peers as having significant experience in Cosmetic Plastic Surgery. Through this society's meetings we continue the lifelong commitment to learning. ASAPS membership is by invitation only. To make sure your Surgeon is a member you may call ASAPS at (888) 272-7711 or visit the website at www.surgery.org.

Member of ASAPS? YES _____ NO _____

3. Does Your Surgeon Have Local Hospital Privileges?

Regardless of which Surgery Center or office- based procedure room your surgeon operates in, he or she should have privileges at a local hospital to do the same procedure. This ensures that they could manage any potential complications that may arise. Call the hospital and ask for the "Medical Staff Office" to inquire about privileges.

Hospital privileges? YES _____ NO _____

4. Surgical Facility.

Where is your operation to be done? For safety purposes procedures involving anesthesia should only be done in accredited facilities such as outpatient surgery centers or hospitals. Always ask your surgeon where the procedure will be done and check by calling that facility about their accreditation.

Name of Surgical Facility _____

Accredited Facility? YES _____ NO _____

5. Thoroughness

After your initial consultation you should feel that your surgeon has been very thorough in asking questions about your goals, actually listening to your answers, examining the areas involved, and discussing options. If you do not feel you have all your questions answered you should have a second consultation or get a second opinion from another Plastic Surgeon.

My Surgeon was thorough YES_____ NO_____

6. Do You Have All The Details?

Before surgery your surgeon should discuss all the details of your operation. What is your procedure(s) called? What type of anesthesia will you get and who is giving it? What is the total cost of the procedure including operating room, surgeon's fee, and anesthesia?

I can answer these questions YES_____ NO_____

YOUR INITIAL PLASTIC SURGERY CONSULTATION

1. It is usually best to describe the problem(s) you would like corrected to your Plastic Surgeon and then let the Surgeon suggest options and procedure(s) to improve upon the problem area(s). Take a moment to write down what you would like to have corrected.

2. What procedure(s) did the Surgeon suggest to you for achieving your goals?

3. Are there any other surgical options available that would also meet your needs?

4. How many of these procedures has your surgeon done? _____

5. How often does your Surgeon do these procedures? _____

6. What are the possible risks associated with this procedure?

7. Recovery period

How much time off work? _____

What restrictions on activities? _____

How many follow-up visits and when? _____

When can I drive a car? _____

How long until I am completely healed? _____

8. What pain pills will I be given after surgery? _____

9. Do I need to get prescriptions filled before surgery? _____

10. What is the Surgeon's policy on revisions? _____

11. What is the **total** cost for the surgery?

Surgeon's fee _____

Operating room _____

Anesthesia _____

Any other _____

Total cost _____

Finally,

After your consultation you should feel like you have a good rapport with your Surgeon. You should feel that he or she listened to your concerns and really understands your goals.

Before agreeing to the surgery, ask yourself these questions –

Am I comfortable with the experience of this Surgeon?

Did the office staff make me feel at ease?

Do I feel like I can ask questions of the Surgeon and staff?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no” you should schedule a second consultation before surgery or seek a second opinion with another Surgeon.

By following this outline before surgery you are maximizing your chances of having your expectations met and being happy with the final outcome.

Wishing you all the best. Congratulations on being “**Beautiful By Choice**”

Sincerely,

Steven Robinson, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Ohio Plastic Surgeons, Inc.
www.ohioplasticsurgeons.com