

Breast Reduction

Large, pendulous breasts may cause a woman to experience various medical problems caused by the excessive weight of the breast tissue. Problems with posture, skeletal deformities, back and neck pain, skin irritations and nerve irritations of the fingers are common with this condition. Bra straps often leave indentations in the shoulder area. Many women, especially teenage girls, are very self-conscious if they have unusually large breasts. With breast reduction surgery, women of all ages are able to have breasts that are better shaped and in proportion.

Breast reduction, or reduction mammoplasty, is a procedure that removes fat, glandular tissue, and skin from the breasts, making them smaller, lighter, and firmer. Breast reduction may also involve reducing the size of the areola.

In most cases, a breast reduction is not performed until the breasts are fully developed. However, the procedure can be done earlier if large breasts are causing serious physical discomfort. Breast reduction is not recommended for women who intend to breast-feed.

Insurance vs. Cosmetic?
How is the procedure performed?
Risks?
Recovery?
Other procedures to consider?

Insurance vs. Cosmetic?

Insurance carriers have specific requirements in order to consider breast reduction a medically necessary procedure. In order to find out more about this, you should contact customer service for your specific plan. This phone number can be found on your insurance card. When you call, ask if "breast reduction" is a covered benefit, CPT code 19318.

In general, you must be able to demonstrate 6 months of documented treatment of rash, infection, or chafing beneath the breasts. You must provide evidence of shoulder grooves, and interference with daily activities because of the large size of your breasts (e.g. chronic back pain, neck and/or shoulder pain) with 6 months documentation of treatment.

It is very helpful to provide our office with documentation from your primary care physician (PCP), chiropractor, or physical therapist, to demonstrate that you have been treated for either rashes or back pain for a minimum period of 6 months.

Your insurance company also requires that enough breast tissue be removed to fit their criteria. In general, the minimum amount to be removed is almost a pound per breast. This issue will be just one of the topics discussed during your initial consultation with Dr. Butterfield.

For those patients who know that they will not fit the above criteria, Dr. Butterfield, invites you to come in for a consultation and a cosmetic quote. Many women decide to undergo breast reduction, for aesthetic reasons as well as improved health.

How is the procedure performed?

Performed under general anesthesia, the two- to four-hour procedure removes fat and glandular tissue and tightens skin to produce smaller, lighter breasts that are in a healthier proportion to the rest of the body. Most often, women undergoing breast reduction remain overnight in the hospital.

Depending on the patient's degree and type of breast reduction, Dr. Butterfield offers her patients traditional as well as newer short-scar procedures. The traditional technique has a scar in the shape of an "anchor", with a circular incision around the nipple, a vertical incision down the mid breast, and a horizontal incision beneath the breast. Short-scar techniques leave a "lollipop" incision on the breast.

Risks?

Any surgical procedure comes with inherent risk, such as the effects of anesthesia, infection, bleeding and swelling. There are some risks which are more specific to breast reduction, these include: loss of feeling in the nipple, differences in size and shape between the breasts, scarring, inability to breast feed. Also, your breasts may go through many changes during and after a pregnancy, so this should be a consideration when deciding on the time frame of your surgery.

Recovery?

The length of time it takes to recuperate after breast reduction varies depending on the procedure performed and the patient. Most patients will require assistance for the first day or two, then most are able to care for themselves. Most return to work between 2 to 4 weeks after the procedure.

Other procedures to consider?

Liposuction is an excellent addition to breast reduction surgery. Many women find that even after reducing the size of their breasts, they are bothered by excess fatty tissue in the armpits. This is an area that can be beautifully contoured with liposuction, at the same time as the breast reduction. (Insurance does not cover this procedure).