



## *Procedure Information*

### **After breast augmentation surgery**

Recovery from breast augmentation surgery is different for everyone. Some women have a very easy time of it, while others have more difficulty. Recovery times are individual as well. As with any type of surgery, some people tend to bounce back quicker than others.

Upon waking from surgery, you will probably feel somewhat groggy, especially if you have had general anesthesia. If you have had twilight, you may still experience grogginess, but generally speaking, women who have this type of anesthesia usually wake up faster. Post-operative nausea and vomiting are less of a risk with twilight sedation, as well.

You may or may not experience nausea and/or vomiting. If you had intravenous anti-nausea medications during surgery, you have a better chance of avoiding upset stomach. However, if this isn't the case, inform your plastic surgeon, anesthesiologist, or attending nurse. Zofran, a very strong anti-emetic (anti-nausea) medication, can be given. This is the medication that is given to cancer patients to reduce or eliminate vomiting and nausea after chemotherapy.

Your breasts may be wrapped tightly in an ace bandage, or your surgeon may have put you into a surgical bra. He or she will instruct you as to how long you will have to wear this.

#### **What to expect following surgery**

Below is a list of things that you may or may not experience during recovery. The list is long, but don't let it discourage you. Many of the things on the list, such as tiredness, constipation, fluid retention, etc., can occur after ANY type of surgery. This list will most likely sound much worse than it actually is.

**Tightness / Pressure in the Chest** - If your implants were placed under the muscle, you are pretty much guaranteed to experience this on some level. Your pectoral muscles now have breast implants underneath them. The muscles need time to stretch out over the implants. As these muscles gradually stretch, the feeling of tightness will gradually dissipate. Some women, and plastic surgeons as well, describe this feeling as an elephant being on your chest. Others describe it as badly pulled muscles, or how one might feel one day after doing a thousand push-ups.



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**Feeling of Engorgement** - For those of you who have had children, you know exactly what engorgement feels like. For those of you who have not had children, here is an explanation. A few days after giving birth, your milk begins to come in. If you do not breastfeed, or if your baby isn't feeding enough, your breasts will swell. They will become warm, tender, and painful. There is also a feeling of great "pressure" on the breasts, and they may feel very heavy. Many women experience this same feeling after breast augmentation surgery. It usually goes away during the first week or so.

**Stiffness / Tightness Upon Waking in the Morning** - You will notice upon waking that you feel extra "stiff". This is normal, and the feeling does dissipate once you get up and start moving around. The morning stiffness can persist for weeks, but should become more and more manageable with each passing day.

If you've ever done an extra hard workout at the gym and felt sore the next morning...well, the same principle applies here. Once those chest muscles are loosened up, you feel much better.

**Sore creases** - This is yet another common feeling after breast augmentation surgery. Many times, the crease has to be lowered in order for the breast implant to be centered behind the nipple/areola. This can cause the creases to be more tender and sore after surgery.

**Post-op depression or post-op "blues"** - With any type of surgery, post-op depression is a possibility, and is actually not uncommon. Depression can be attributed to pain, anesthesia, narcotics / pain medications, and various other things. Lack of sleep can exaggerate these feelings.

Many women who experience post-op blues / depression have said that they did question themselves about whether or not they made the right decision to have surgery. Some of this may be attributed to not getting instant gratification. You wait to have the surgery, go through all of the excitement and anxiety that the anticipation leading up to surgery brings, then you come out sore, bruised, and not looking anything like you thought you would. Sometimes the breast implants may be really high on the chest, or have a torpedo-like look, and not look anything like normal breasts. This can be very alarming to women who aren't prepared for this. Hence, the onset of feelings of uncertainty about having this surgery in the first place. The good news is that your breasts will change, it just takes a little time and a lot of patience.

**Nausea and/or Vomiting and/or Constipation** - It's not uncommon to feel nauseous soon after waking up from surgery. The anesthesia meds can really wreak havoc on your tummy. Usually the anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist will give you anti-nausea drugs via IV drip during surgery. This helps to limit, if not completely alleviate nausea and vomiting after surgery. If you wake up nauseous, tell your surgeon or nurse so that they can give you something to help alleviate it.

Pain medications taken after surgery can also upset your stomach. Some plastic surgeons will prescribe anti-nausea medications for you to take in the event that you experience nausea or vomiting, while some pain medications, such as Mepergan, have an anti-nausea drug built right in. Most of the time, upset stomach can be avoided if you eat something prior to taking your medications. Sometimes, eating a cracker or two with your pain meds is not enough.



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Constipation is usually a result of the pain medications. Most all of them have a tendency to cause this, some more so than others. If you experience constipation, you might want to try a mild laxative, or drink prune juice. Ask your plastic surgeon about this at your consult, just to make sure he/she has no objections.

**Loss of Appetite** - Since pain medications can cause nausea and vomiting, it's not surprise that some women have a decreased appetite after surgery. Once you are off of the pain medications, your appetite should return to normal.

**Yeast Infections** - Most all plastic surgeons prescribe antibiotics to be taken after surgery. As most women know, antibiotics put you at a higher risk for yeast infection. You most likely won't get an infection, but know that anytime you take antibiotics, for whatever reason, you're at a higher risk.

**Bruising and Swelling** - Bruising and swelling are common after most major surgeries, and you will most likely experience both of them. It is possible for your bruising to move downward, instead of just disappear. For example, after my surgery, I was bruised in the cleavage area, and in the creases. Instead of the bruising just fading away, it moved down to my ribs, then my stomach, then my groin, and finally to my inner thighs. I had never experienced anything like that, but it didn't cause any problems.

Swelling may be present in the cleavage area. If it is, your cleavage area will most likely feel "mushy" or "spongy".

**Bloating / Fluid Retention** - Most women experience bloating, especially in the tummy. This is normal, and will dissipate on it's on, under normal circumstances, and usually doesn't require diuretics. Do not take diuretics without your surgeon's approval.

**Muscle Spasms** - Common in women with breast implants placed in the submuscular plane. Some surgeons prescribe muscle relaxants to help with this, while others do not.

**Back pain** - After breast augmentation surgery, it's normal to walk with your shoulders hunched forward, as if you're trying to "protect" your chest. However, not maintaining proper posture can cause you to have backaches. Remember that you will most likely not be sleeping in your normal position, so the change in sleeping position can aggravate things further. Additionally, when you get up, change positions, etc., you will use other muscles to compensate for your chest muscles, which can also make you sore.

**Itching and Dry / Flaky Skin on Breasts** - You may or may not experience this. It is nothing to be alarmed over. Sometimes, the stretching of the skin causes it to become itchy, dry, and flaky. Using a lotion on your breasts will help make you more comfortable. You should always be careful NOT to get any lotion on your incisions until you are sure that they are completely closed, or until your surgeon tells you that it is okay to apply it to those areas.

**Limited Mobility** - In the very early post-op stage, you may notice that it is difficult to perform certain tasks, or move in certain ways. For example, you may have trouble opening medications (depending on the type of cap they have on them), opening drinks, lifting your arms above your head, washing your hair, driving a car (especially one with a manual transmission), etc.



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This is more true for women with under the muscle implants than for women with over the muscle implants. With overs, no stretching of the muscle is involved.

**Hard / Lumpy Incisions** - It's not uncommon for your incision to feel "hard" or "lumpy" at some point in your recovery. This is mainly due to the buildup of scar tissue. The best advice I can give, which usually works for everyone, is to massage the incision, which should help break up some of that scar tissue. Make sure that your incision is completely closed before you put your fingers on them. You wouldn't want to introduce any bacteria to the incision, as it could cause an infection, which you don't want.

**UBS ("Ugly Breasts Syndrome")** - You've finally had your surgery, and the results you're seeing aren't what you paid for. "Ugly Breast Syndrome" happens to many women that have breast augmentation surgery. Most women aren't going to have gorgeous breasts as soon as they roll out of the operating room. They may appear oblong in shape, or torpedo-like, or they may look swollen, broad, and flat. The implants may ride high, and be literally right up against your collar bone in the beginning. They may be bruised and swollen, and your nipples may be puffy and swollen. They may look HUGE, or flat. For women who do not realize that this is completely normal, it can be a terrifying experience. The good news is that things will get better, given some time and patience.

**Sharp / Stabbing Pains** - These are sometimes referred to by breast augmentation patients as "zingers", and are very common. These pains usually indicate nerve regeneration. So, while they may not be something you enjoy experiencing, keep in mind that nerve regeneration is a good thing. Also remember that as you the further you are post-op, the less intense the feeling becomes. The pains are very short-lived. However, if you are worried about a particular type of pain you're having, consult with your surgeon. That's what they're there for. At the very least, they can offer you peace of mind. At the most, they can take care of any problem that may arise.

**Extreme Sensitivity and/or Numbness** - Your breasts will probably feel somewhat numb early on, and at the same time, they may be extremely sensitive. It sounds strange, but it happens. The good news is that it's temporary, it's to be expected after this type of surgery, and the sensitivity issues resolve on their own. Most plastic surgeons will tell you that it may be up to a year before normal sensitivity returns. In my case, my sensitivity in my breasts was back to normal at 3 months post-op. Some women have taken vitamin B supplements, since vitamin B is good for the nervous system.

*NOTE: Always consult with your surgeon prior to adding any medications, vitamins, or herbal supplements to your daily routine.*

**Lack of Energy** - Surgery, although a "planned" trauma, is still a shock to the body. The body requires energy in order to heal. Because of this, you will not have the endurance that you normally have, at least not for a few weeks. You'll notice that you tire much quicker. Listen to your body. If you are tired, rest. Most surgeons don't recommend complete bed rest, as you need to get up and move around to keep from being sore. Also keep in mind that not moving around can cause blood clots, which can travel from the legs to the lungs or brain, and be fatal. It can also cause you to get very sore and stiff.

*Information courtesy of [Justbreastimplants.com](http://Justbreastimplants.com)*



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