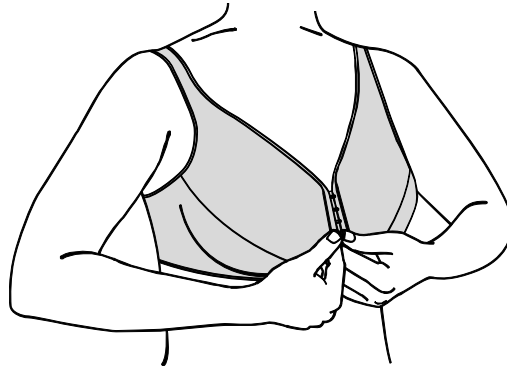


Bra-Buying Guide for Breast Cancer Patients



PMH



Breast surgery and radiation therapy will affect the way you shop for a bra. Finding the right bra for you may be challenging because of the change in the shape and size of your breasts, pain and discomfort, or swelling caused by lymphedema.

This pamphlet will help you by answering the following questions:

- Why is the right bra important?
- Where can I find a bra that suits my body shape?
- What is lymphedema?
- If I have lymphedema, what should I look for in a bra?

Why is the right bra important?

Breast cancer treatment may initially change the way a woman views her body. Negative feelings are more likely to lead to low self-esteem and other psychological stress.

Believe it or not, a well-fitted bra can make you feel better! The right bra could even allow you to wear some of those T-shirts and camisoles you may have long given up on.

A good bra will also help with some of the side-effects of breast cancer treatment, such as increased sensitivity or numbness around the treated area, swelling and lymphedema..

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Created: 04/2008

Form: D-5512



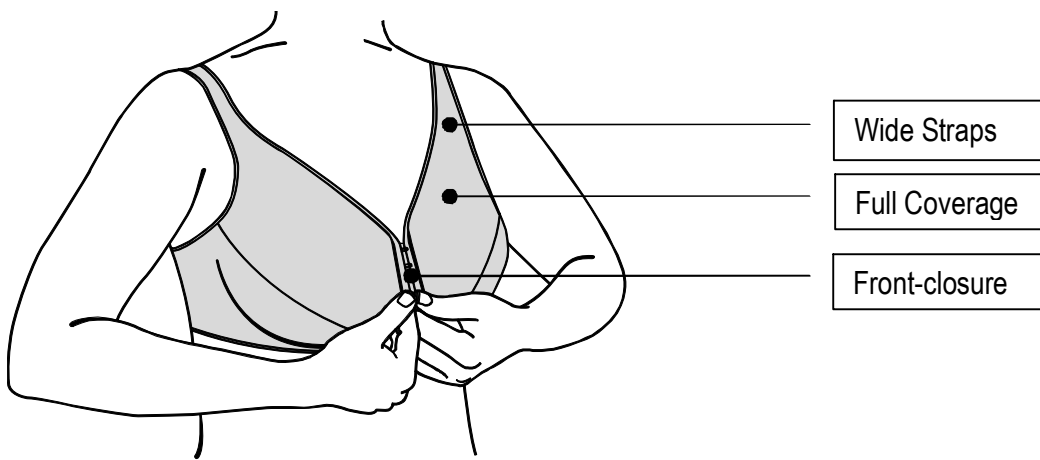
Did you know that 8 out of 10 women wear the wrong size of bra?

Use this guide to help you pick the right bra style; one that will meet your individual needs at a cost that is affordable to you. Before heading out on your bra-shopping trip, talk to an experienced nurse, physician or other clinical expert.

General Bra-Shopping Tips:

- A bra that has been fitted properly should not hug your chest too tightly. A well-fitted bra should not leave impressions or red marks after you take it off.
- Your surgery (lumpectomy or mastectomy) and the location of your incisions may determine the type of bra you are able to wear and its cost.
- A bra that provides full-coverage with wide straps and a front-closure may be easier to wear and may offer more comfort.

Full Coverage Bra

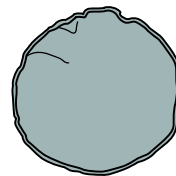
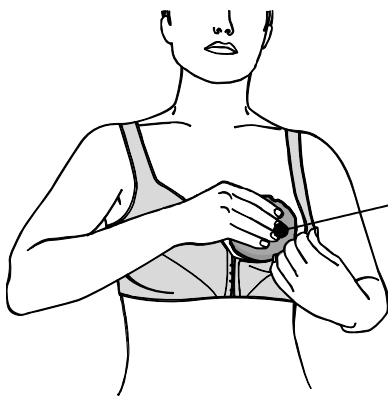


- Ask your bra-fitter if your surgery allows for certain bra styles such as low-cut or strapless bras.
- Before visiting the store, consider arranging an appointment with the bra-fitter, as they may not be available at all times.
- Some bra-fitters may even provide home services. Ask the staff at the store if this service is available.
- Not all stores will carry every product, but staff may be willing to order certain items. If the store does not carry what you want, ask the staff if ordering services are available. You may also ask the staff for the option of designing a custom-made bra to suit your body shape and taste.

- Bring your favourite shirt or low-cut top along for your fitting. This will help the fitter find the best bra to suit your clothing style.
- Generally, bras need to be replaced after 3 to 6 months of constant use.
- You can swim at the beach if your prosthesis is made of silicone. However, swimming in a pool with your silicone prosthesis is discouraged. The chlorine will damage it. Consider swimforms or 'Been-A-Boobs' (see Website Resources) instead as these can be used in swimming pools.
- Shop around. Do not decide to buy a bra until you are sure it is the best bra for YOU.
- Bring a close friend for encouragement and support! One who will tell you honestly what suits you best.

Bra-Shopping After Surgery

- You can wear a bra immediately after surgery, as long as you are comfortable. Surgical or post-operative bras are generally suggested for the first few weeks after the operation. Lightweight, seamless leisure bras with front closures (such as sports or jogging bras) are another option. They are adjustable and tend to interfere less with painful incision areas. However, they may not always be suitable for women with larger breasts.
- Fibre puffs are usually recommended for mastectomy patients who prefer to have breast curves immediately after surgery. These puffs have a fixed, defined shape and do not look as natural. They are only recommended for a short while, until a prosthesis fitting can be arranged.
- Post-surgical camisoles have pockets for fibre puffs, and may have compartments for chest drains (see Retailer List).
- Consider using a product such as the "Been-A-Boob" prostheses. Like fibre puffs, they are lightweight for comfort, but better imitate the look of a natural breast (see Website Resources).



The Been-A-Boob by Janac

Quick-drying material
containing small plastic pellets

- If you are comfortable wearing bras you already own, extra hooks known as bra extenders on the back of your bra may help to relieve pressure on tender areas. Bra extenders are available at some retail stores (see Retailer List).
- Wait 6 to 8 weeks after surgery before you get fitted for a new bra. This is to avoid fitting bras over tender, swollen areas.

Beyond 6-8 weeks post-surgery

For Lumpectomy Patients:

- If your breasts are different sizes after surgery, your bra should be fitted using the larger breast.
- If there is only a slight difference in the size of your breasts, a gel-pad, small foam or silicone insert may be helpful. Bra padding (usually made of foam) can be bought in various sizes and is easily available. Gel-pads are also available at some lingerie stores. Consider using a bra with stretchy cups to better hold your foam, silicone or gel filling.
- Junior or Baby ‘Been-A-Boob’ prostheses, and lumpectomy silicone shells are another alternative to even-out the size of both breasts after small or large lumpectomies (see Website Resources and Retailer List).
- Consider purchasing padded bras, and increase or decrease the amount of padding to fit the size you want.

For Mastectomy Patients:

- With a single mastectomy, the bra should fit your natural breast.
- With a double mastectomy, you can choose your bra cup size. It is important to keep the weight of the prosthesis close to what your body is used to. This helps prevent spine and back pain caused by weight imbalances in the front of the chest.

For Patients with Prostheses:

- It is recommended that you get fitted for your bra first, before getting fitted for your prosthesis.
- It is important to get fitted for your prosthesis as soon as you are comfortable. This helps to prevent spine re-alignment as it compensates for imbalances and weight changes in the front of the chest.
- Be sure that you are fitted by a trained and certified prosthesis expert.
- Adjust your bra straps so that the prostheses lie about halfway between your elbow and your shoulder... not too high, and not too low!

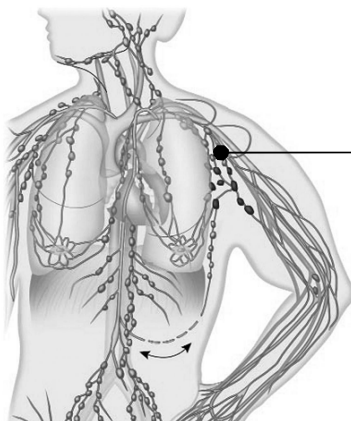
- Consider purchasing a prosthesis or mastectomy/lumpectomy bra. These bras are specially designed with pockets for prostheses. These pockets support the prosthesis, so you do not have to worry about it slipping out.
- Push-up bras sold at lingerie stores are also designed with pockets. These bras can be used as a less expensive alternative to mastectomy/lumpectomy bras.
- Prosthesis pockets can be sewn into bras you already own using elastic fabric. If you cannot sew, this service may be available at your local alterations store or at some bra retailers (see Retailers List).
- Wearing a full-coverage bra will prevent the prosthesis from showing above the top edge of your bra.
- Because women's bodies are constantly changing, it is recommended that you see a certified prosthesis fitter at least once a year to re-evaluate your fitting.
- Please note that some women are more comfortable without a prosthesis, and this is okay too!

For Patients Undergoing Radiation Treatment:

- To prevent red, itchy and dry skin from getting worse, lightweight leisure and sports bras are generally recommended during radiation therapy (see Retailers List).
- Underwires may rub against sensitive skin, so they should be avoided during radiation therapy treatment.
- To promote healing of irritated skin, air the skin as often as possible and try to wear bras as little as possible.

What is Lymphedema?

Lymphedema is a build up of protein-rich fluid (lymph) in tissues of the body, causing swelling in the arm, hand, chest, breast or back of breast cancer survivors.



Lymphedema
 Axillary Lymph nodes and lymphatics are removed during surgery

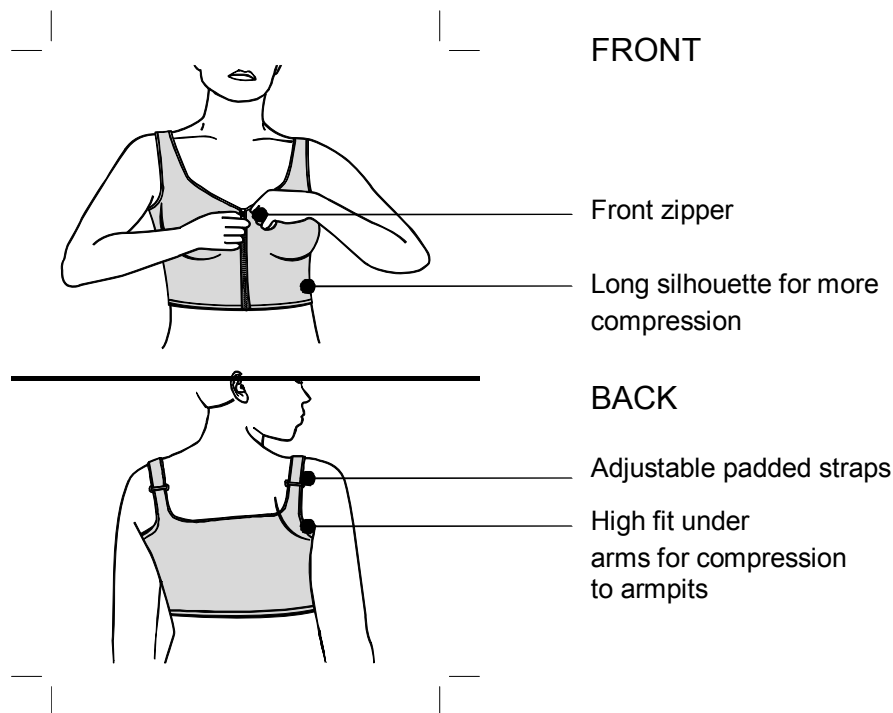
Breast cancer patients have a 20% chance of getting lymphedema from surgery alone increasing to 30% when treatment includes radiation therapy. This means that if you had surgery and/or radiation treatment for breast cancer, you are at risk of developing lymphedema.

If I have lymphedema, what features should I look for in a bra?

Wearing the right bra may prevent lymphedema from getting worse, delay its onset, or prevent it from occurring altogether. The following tips may help you find a suitable bra:

- Compression bras and vests provide pressure to areas of the breast and trunk to promote lymph flow through areas vulnerable to fluid accumulation. They have a high fit under the arms to provide compression to the armpit, and padding under the straps to relieve shoulder strain. Compression garments can be custom-made and are available from a number of retailers (see Retailers List).
- Regular, non-compression bras with wide straps lessen the strain on the arm and underlying lymphatics. Wide straps allow lymph to flow more freely and may prevent fluid build-up, pain and discomfort. Narrow straps constrict the lymphatic system, causing a build-up of fluid through what is sometimes called the ‘Tourniquet Effect’.
- Check with a healthcare provider who knows about lymphedema to determine if you should avoid underwires in a bra.

Compression Bra:



Where can I find a bra that suits my body's needs?

The following table provides a list of retailers that carry bra products for breast cancer patients and survivors:

Retailer	Products Available	Services Available
Amherst All Care 3462 Kingston Rd. Scarborough, ON. 416 261 6409	Compression garments Front-closure bras Leisure bras Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras (in a variety of materials including lace) Post-operative / Surgical bras Prostheses Swimwear	Bra fitting Prosthesis fitting

Retailer	Products Available	Services Available
<p>Brava Boutique bravaboutique.ca</p> <p>25 King St West, Toronto, ON.</p> <p>416 363 1843</p>	<p>Compression garments Front-closure bras Leisure bras Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras (in a variety of materials including lace) Post-operative/ Surgical bras Prostheses Swimwear</p>	<p>Adding pockets to your own bras Bra-fitting Opportunity to order from manufacturers Prosthesis-fitting</p>
<p>Custom Comfort</p> <p>1-15150 Yonge St. Aurora, ON.</p> <p>905 841 5337</p>	<p>Compression garments (ready-made and custom-made) Designer bras Front-closure bras Leisure bras Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras (in a variety of materials including lace) Post-operative/Surgical bras Prostheses</p>	<p>Bra-fitting Prosthesis-fitting Home service</p>
<p>Linea Intima (lineaintima.com).</p> <p>1925 Avenue Rd. (just south of the 401), Toronto, ON.</p> <p>416 780 1726</p>	<p>Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras</p>	<p>Bra-fitting by mastectomy experts</p>
<p>250 Wincott Dr. Richview Plaza, Etobicoke, ON.</p> <p>416 245 3633</p>		

Retailer	Products Available	Services Available
<p>178 Main St. Unionville, ON.</p> <p>905 947 1744</p>		
<p>250 Wincott Dr. Richview Plaza, Etobicoke, ON</p> <p>416 245 3633</p>		
<p>Mansueta Medical Garment Fitters</p> <p>700 University Ave, Toronto, ON.</p> <p>416 591 0006</p>	<p>Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras Sports bras Been-A-Boobs Prostheses Compression garments Swimwear</p>	<p>Bra-fitting Opportunity to order from manufacturers Prosthesis-fitting</p>
<p>Shoppers Home Health Care (Lawrence Plaza)</p> <p>528 Lawrence Ave West, Toronto, ON.</p> <p>416 789 3368</p>	<p>Compression garments Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras Prostheses Swimwear</p>	<p>Bra fitting Prosthesis fitting</p>
<p>Shoppers Home Health Care (Scarborough)</p> <p>685 McCowan Rd, Scarborough, ON.</p> <p>416 431 4621</p>	<p>Compression garments Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras Prostheses Swimwear (limited range)</p>	<p>Bra and Prosthesis fitting Lymphedema specialist on site Ordering from manufacturers Annual open-house where manufacturing</p>

Retailer	Products Available	Services Available
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Please note that not all Shoppers Home Health Care stores have the same services or variety of items.</p> </div>	<p>companies display products to the public (Contact store for more information)</p>
<p>Twin Sister's Mastectomy Boutique.</p> <p>440 Browns Line, Suite L101, Etobicoke, ON.</p> <p>416 259 1328</p>	<p>Lumpectomy and Mastectomy bras Prostheses</p>	<p>Bra and Prosthesis fitting</p>

Website Resources

For more information on bra and prosthesis fitting, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.amoena.com/ca>

Amoena provides a wide range of fashionable intimate apparel, swimwear and breast forms to provide a better quality of life for women who have undergone breast surgery.

<http://www.bellisse.com/>

Bellisse helps women with Truncal Lymphedema by supplying a garment designed to increase comfort and mobility, and by sharing the information gathered about the condition.

<http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/>

Breast Cancer Care is the UK's leading provider of information, practical assistance and emotional support for those affected by breast cancer.

<http://www.eloise.co.uk/>

A comprehensive website, based in the UK, with information on post-mastectomy wear and tips on prosthesis and bra fitting.

<http://www.janacsportswear.ca/>

Supplies sportswear and special prostheses (Been-A-Boob) for women who have had breast cancer surgery.

Department & Lingerie Stores

The following department stores provide general bra-fitting services:

Sears, The Bay, Zellers.

The following stores provide bra accessory items (clear straps, bra extenders, gel pads):

Fabricland, La Senza, La Vie En Rose, Walmart.