Your guide to:
Bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery

For women who are having or have had one or more of these breast surgeries (with drains put in):

- Mastectomy
- Lumpectomy
- Axillary node dissection
- Sentinel lymph node biopsy
- Breast reconstruction

Read this resource to learn:

- About your breast surgery
- What to expect after surgery
- What a breast prosthesis is
- How to choose the right breast prosthesis after surgery
- Where to find more information

Read this guide to learn how to pick the right bra and breast prosthesis for you. Before you buy a bra or breast prosthesis after breast surgery, talk to your nurse, doctor or another member of your health care team. They can answer any questions or concerns you may have.
About your surgery

You may be having or have had:

Breast surgery. This is any surgery on the breast(s) to try prevent cancer growth.

OR

Breast cancer surgery. This is any surgery on the breast(s) to try remove or control the growth of cancer.

You may be having or have had one or more of the following breast surgeries:

- **Mastectomy** (also called a “total mastectomy”, or “simple mastectomy”). This is surgery to remove the whole breast with cancer in it. A mastectomy can also be done to try prevent the growth of cancer.

- **Lumpectomy** (also called “partial mastectomy”). This is surgery to remove only the part of the breast with cancer, and some breast tissue around it. A lumpectomy is done to try remove, or prevent, cancer growth.

- **Axillary node dissection.** Lymph nodes are bean-shaped vessels that are found all over your body. An axillary lymph node dissection is surgery to remove the lymph nodes from under the arm (axilla).

- **Sentinel lymph node biopsy.** A sentinel lymph node is the first lymph node that cancer is likely to spread to.

  A sentinel lymph node biopsy is surgery to find, remove and test some sentinel lymph nodes to see if there is cancer there. This helps find out if cancer has spread to lymph nodes under your arm.

- **Breast reconstruction.** This is surgery for women who had all, or a big part of their breast(s) removed. Breast reconstruction re-builds the breast shape so that it is about the same size and shape as it was before it was removed.

This guide was made only for women who are having or have had breast surgery with breast drains put in. You will need to use special breast garments while you have breast drains.
What are breast drains?

During your breast surgery, you will have breast drains put in. Breast drains are:

- Plastic or rubber tubes put into the area where the whole breast or part of the breast was removed (for example, under the arm).
- Used to remove extra blood and fluid from the area that had surgery.

Below are images of the Jackson-Pratt Drain (also called a “JP Drain”).

The JP Drain is the type of drain most often used after breast surgery. It helps to collect bodily fluids from the areas that had surgery.

This is an image of a JP Drain used after a mastectomy.
**What should I expect after breast surgery?**

Your need for bras and breast prostheses (breast-shaped piece worn inside bras to look like the shape of a real breast) will change before and after surgery. This is because your body will change after surgery and the bras you used before may not fit.

Your needs may change from the time you have breast surgery, until the time you feel healed and ready to go back to the bras you used before your surgery.

You will recover in 3 phases (sets of time) after breast surgery:

**Phase 1:** Week 1 (day of surgery to 6 days after surgery). During this time, you will wear special tops to help you heal, and have breast drains inserted (put in).

**Phase 2:** Week 2 to Week 5. During this time, you can start wearing bras again. You will also have your breast drains removed.

**Phase 3:** Week 6 onwards. During this time, you can use breast prostheses, bras and can wear the clothes you used before surgery.

As you heal, you may want to wear a soft bra that is loose fitting. After you have healed, you may want to buy a new bra that fits your body after surgery.

Keep reading to learn more about each phase after breast surgery, and the types of bras and breast prostheses you can use.
What should I wear right after breast surgery?

For the first week after your surgery, you will not want to wear a normal bra. This is because your chest will be sore from the stitches and breast drains put in during surgery. Wearing a normal bra will cause you pain, or irritate (bother) the area where you had surgery.

Some bras are more comfortable than others to wear during this time.

- You have the option to wear a bra or camisole right after mastectomy surgery (with or without reconstruction). Not every person will find this comfortable.

- You can wear a bra without underwire right after an axillary node dissection or lumpectomy surgery, as long as there is no pressure to drain the site.

- Use bras that you can put on without having to raise your arms. These will be most comfortable to wear.
  
  This includes bras that you can pull up over your hips or bras that close in the front (instead of the back) with zippers, hooks or velcro.

- Stores that make bras and other clothing to wear after breast surgery sometimes call these types of bras “post-surgical garments” or “leisure wear”.

- Normal sports bras and yoga bras are often too tight to use right after surgery. They are also not easy to put on, since you will not be able to pull clothing over your head right after surgery.

Read below to learn more about clothing that is helpful and safe to wear during this phase.
Post-surgical camisoles (a shirt with no sleeves)

“Post-surgical” clothing is clothing used after having surgery. For example, a post-surgical bra is a bra that is comfortable to wear after having breast surgery.

Some stores sell long, post-surgical camisoles (tops with no sleeves) for women to use right after their breast surgery. Post-surgical camisoles are very useful for women who feel sore or sensitive in the breast area.

Post-surgical camisoles:

• Are made with soft, stretchy cotton to support the breast(s) that you had surgery on.

• Have seams that do not rub, or irritate (bother) your skin.

• Have left and right pockets in the breast area that can hold soft fibre-fills (fibre in the shape of a breast, placed on the side you had surgery). Extra fibre-fill can be added to the pockets to get a size closer to the size of your other breast.

Important: Call the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation to get fibre-fill at no cost: 416-596-6773.
• Protect your incision (cut made during surgery) by placing soft fibre-filling over it.

• Have holes on both sides to hold and support the tubes linked to breast drains.

• Have pouches that attach with velcro. These pouches hold the drain pouch in place. They can be removed after your drains are removed. You can still use the camisol without these pouches.

• Can be pulled up over your hips. This lets you move comfortably. You do not have to worry about the movement in your arms and shoulder.

• Are also useful to manage the side effects of radiation treatment for breast cancer. For example, sometimes bras cannot be used due to sensitive skin on the chest.

• Can be used as sleepwear right after surgery.

Post-surgical camisoles are sold at mastectomy stores (stores that sell bras and breast prostheses for after breast surgery).

Read the pamphlet called “Know where to buy bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery” for a list of stores that sell post-surgical camisoles. Ask a member of your health care team for a copy, or visit the Patient & Family Library (main floor of the Princess Margaret) to pick one up.

Visit this web page to read the pamphlet online:
http://wwwuhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/HealthInformation/HealthTopics/Documents/Know where to buy bras after breast surgery.pdf
What should I wear after my breast drains are removed?

During this time, your breast drains are removed. After your drains are removed, your chest will need to finish healing.

It may be too soon to go back to using your normal bras if you still feel sore or sensitive in the breast area. Ask a member of your health care team if it is safe to do this.

Read below to learn more about clothing that is helpful and safe to use during this phase.

Post-surgical bras (leisure bras)

Post-surgical bras (or leisure bras) are styles of bras women wear while they are healing after breast surgery.

- Post-surgical bras can give you comfort and protect your incisions (cuts made on your breast during surgery) as you heal.

  See the image to the right.

- Post-surgical bras open from the front using a zipper, hooks or velcro. They are easy to take on and off.

  See the image to the right.
You can choose not to use post-surgical bras and wait until you are fully healed to wear normal bras. But post-surgical bras are the best option to help you heal and stay safe at this time.

If you choose to use a post-surgical bra:

- Make sure it is easy to put on and feels comfortable to use.
- Keep avoiding sports bras and yoga-wear. They are often much too tight to use during this time and can cause pain and stress on your arms and chest when putting them on.

Use a post-surgical bra that you can:

- Pull up over your hips to put on with ease
- Put on using a front closing (e.g. zipper, hooks or velcro)
- Wear without it hugging your chest too tight or leaving imprints after you take it off
- Use as you begin to get your shoulder and arm movement back

Post-surgical bras come in few styles, which can include:

- Sports bras and sportswear you can pull up over your hips or that have a front closing
- Sleepwear with pockets to hold a ready-made breast prosthesis (see page 16 for details)

Post-surgical bras are often made with soft material that fits long the torso (mid-section, or middle part of the body), so it does not irritate (bother) the incision on your chest while it heals.

Women do not have to wear post-surgical bras after they heal from breast surgery. But some women still find them comfortable and choose to keep wearing them.

Keep reading to learn more about your clothing options during this phase.
Breast prostheses

A prosthesis is an artificial (not real) replacement of a body part that has been removed or changed. More than one prosthesis is called “prostheses”.

Breast prostheses are used to replace a whole breast, or part of a breast, that may have been removed or changed during breast surgery. Some women may want to use a nipple prosthesis, too, if their nipple was changed or removed during breast surgery.

Women who choose to wear a breast prosthesis may want to use a nipple prosthesis, too, if their nipple was changed or removed during surgery.

Breast prostheses are easy to wear. They can be worn:

- Right on top of your skin
- In a bra with a pocket to hold the prosthesis, called a “mastectomy bra”

Breast prostheses can be made from:

- Silicone gel
- Foam
- Fibre-fill

Breast prostheses help to keep your bras in place. A prosthesis that fits well will keep your bra from riding up or shifting from side to side.

Breast prostheses can be worn for a short time (short-term prostheses) or a long time after surgery (long-term prostheses).
Short-term breast prostheses

For the first 6 weeks after your surgery, your chest will be sensitive as it heals. At this time, it may be helpful to wear soft, short-term breast prostheses.

You have 2 main options for short-term breast prostheses:

1. **Fibre-fill foams.** You can buy soft, fluffy fibre-fill foams and put them in the pockets of post-surgical camisoles or in post-surgical bras.

   Over time you may need to change or replace the fibre-fill inside the foams as they get old or become flat.

   ![Fibre-fill foam](image)

   This is an image of fibre-fill foam. Place more or less fibre-fill inside the pocket to make it bigger, until your breasts look evenly shaped.

2. **Ready-made, soft foam breast prostheses (also called “leisure breast forms”).**
   Leisure breast forms come in many shapes and sizes. This type of prosthesis is not as heavy as the normal, ready-made breast prostheses.

   Leisure breast forms can give you more comfort during this phase, since your chest is still sensitive. But, you cannot adjust the size or contents (what is inside) of leisure breast forms.
Phase 3: Week 6 after surgery and onwards

During this time, your breast may still feel swollen and tender. For this reason, wait 6 to 8 weeks after surgery before getting fitted for a new bra.

When you are ready to get fitted for a new bra:

- Go see a bra-fitter trained in mastectomy and lumpectomy clothes. They can help you find the right bra for you.
- A bra-fitter is someone trained in making sure bras fit well. They can give you advice on choosing a bra that offers you comfort.
- Your bra should be fitted for the larger breast.
- Bra-fitters often work at stores that sell bras, and other leisure wear. Make an appointment with the bra-fitter, as they may not be free at all times.
- The cost of a bra-fitter can vary. Ask each bra store or bra-fitter about the cost of their services.

How can a bra-fitter help me?

A bra-fitter will ask you about, and support you with:

- Any concerns you might have about your figure (body shape). For example, you may feel self-conscious (awkward, or unsure) if your breasts are no longer the same size after surgery. A bra-fitter can suggest a bra to help with this.
- Your lifestyle needs. For example you may live an active lifestyle, and need a stretchy bra that allows you to do physical activity.
- Your personal style. For example, you may want a bra to match a certain colour or design.
The bra-fitter will then:

- Measure you to find out your bra size
- Check how well bras in your size fit you
- Suggest some bras that may fit your lifestyle
- Help you choose the best bra for your needs

When you are trying on bras, move around in the bra to make sure it:

- Does not ride up (slide up your chest)
- Looks the way you want it to
- Keeps your breast prosthesis in place (if you have one on)

When you visit a bra-fitter, bring your favourite shirt with you, or a shirt you wear often. It will help the bra-fitter find the best bra to match your clothing style.

Some bra-fitters may offer home services and do the bra fitting at your home. Ask the staff at the store if:

- You can get home service
- How much home service costs

**What do I need to know about wearing a bra during this time?**

Any bra style can be used with a breast prosthesis as long as:

- The bra is the right fit
- The bra can keep the breast prosthesis in place (if you have one)

An expert bra-fitter will:

- Measure your chest to find out your bra size
- Ask you about your lifestyle, needs and personal style choices
- The bra fitter will check the fit of your bras and suggest new ones if they do not fit
What kinds of bras should I use?

The bra you find most comfortable will depend on:

1. The type of surgery you had or are having (e.g. lumpectomy, mastectomy)
2. Where your incisions (cuts made during surgery) are

Bras you can wear at this time come in many styles:

- You can choose to use strapless bras with pockets that fit ready-made breast prostheses (see page 16 for details) inside them. Or you can sew pockets into the cup of normal bras to use with ready-made breast prostheses.

- Custom-made breast prostheses (see page 18 for details) can be used with most or all bra styles.

- To help relieve areas on your chest that may be tender, you can use a bra-extender.

- A bra-extender is a piece of fabric with hooks that connect to the back of a bra to make it a larger fit around the chest.

The image to the right is an example of a bra-extender.

- You can get extenders at many medical garment (clothing) stores, and also at most major clothing stores.

- Bring your favourite tops (e.g. stretchy white t-shirt) to help you judge whether you like the fit of a bra and the shape the bra gives you. Bring a close friend who can help you decide what style suits you.

- Do not use bras with underwire until you have fully healed from breast surgery. Ask a member of your health care team if you are ready to start wearing one.

- After you have fully healed from your breast surgery, you can wear bras that you already own (e.g. bras with underwire), as long as they are not too tight and are the right fit.
How can I tell if a bra fits well?

- The cup of the bra should surround and contain your breast tissue. Your breast tissue should not pucker or bulge outside the cup of the bra.

- If your health care team says it is okay to use a bra with underwire, the underwire should sit in its normal place (under the breasts). When you stand straight the bottom of the underwire should stay flat on your chest and not lift or ride up.

- The underwire or seam of the cup should not sit on top of your breast tissue at the side or front.

- The seams of a wireless bra give strength to the bra and help support the breasts.

- The band around your chest should not be too tight. The band should not cause your tissue to bulge on your back because the band is too tight.

- The bra fitter should be able to place 2 fingers easily under the bra band. If they cannot do this, your bra is too tight.

What are my options for long-term breast prostheses?

Choosing to wear long-term breast prostheses is a personal choice. Many women want to look the same when wearing clothes from before their surgery.

A long-term breast prosthesis that fits well can:

- Give you physical comfort
- Give you confidence in your body image
- Help restore your appearance to the way it was before surgery

A long-term breast prosthesis is made to last longer than a short-term prosthesis. A long-term breast prosthesis is a good long-term option for when your chest has healed from breast surgery.

If you choose to wear a long-term breast prosthesis, you have 2 options:

1. Ready-made (store bought) breast prostheses
2. Custom-made (made just for you) breast prostheses

Read below for more details on both kinds of long-term breast prostheses.
**Ready-made (store bought) breast prostheses**

These breast prostheses can be bought in stores and are not unique to your breast shape only. Ready-made breast prostheses are also called “off the shelf”, “prefabricated” or “store bought” breast prostheses. They come in many shapes, sizes, weights and colours.

Ready-made, full breast prostheses cost less than ready-made, partial prostheses. This is because a partial prosthesis replaces the shape of only a part of the breast, while a full prosthesis replaces the whole breast.

A breast care specialist can help you choose the best breast prostheses for you. They can help you find products to fit any of your unique needs, like needing a prosthesis that fits:

- left breast
- right breast
- firmly to give more support
- softly to give gentle support
- symmetrically (even)
- asymmetrically (uneven)
- the style that best suits your day-to-day work and lifestyle

Find a breast care specialist at a breast prosthesis store that you feel is best able to find the right prosthesis design for you.

Go to a breast prosthesis store that:

- Has salespeople who will take the time to explain the many types of ready-made breast prostheses to you
- Has many breast prostheses for you to choose from
- Can order-in a breast prosthesis for you, if you cannot find one you like in the store
Some breast care specialists may even provide home services. Ask the staff at the store if they offer this service and if there is a cost.

When you find a ready-made breast prosthesis you like:

- Try it on with the bras you often use.
- Do different movements with your arms and shoulders with the prosthesis in place. This is how you can check to see if the prosthesis is comfortable and does not get in the way of your movements.

Things you should know about ready-made breast prostheses:

- Most are made with a gel inside.
- Most are made to be used with a mastectomy bra (a bra that has pockets that hold the breast prosthesis in place) and placed in the pocket in the cup of the bra.
- Ready-made breast prostheses can also be made with a sticky back surface meant to stick right onto your chest, and stay in place.

See image to the right.

This design allows for a lot more clothing options, such as backless clothing.
• This type of prosthesis is not often used until about 6 months after you heal from breast surgery.

• For a ready-made breast prosthesis to be comfortable and stay in place, the bra must also be the right fit and size.

• Ready-made breast prosthesis often have a back surface that molds to the curves of your chest. These designs can absorb or take heat away from your skin and are good to use in warm weather.

• You do not need to use “weighted” or heavy ready-made prosthesis to keep them in place, or for any other health reason. Choose a light or heavy prosthesis based on your needs.

• They cost of ready-made prostheses can vary, so choose one that best suits your budget and lifestyle.

Custom-made (made just for you) breast prostheses

A custom-made breast prosthesis is designed just for you and made to restore the area where breast tissue was removed during your surgery.

Custom-made breast prostheses support the remaining breast in place when you use a normal bra. They allow you to wear low cut bras and have cleavage showing.

This type of prosthesis can be:

• “Made to measure”. This means it is made to fit a copy of your chest wall. This will make it a better fit.

• Made to be the exact mirror image of the breast that did not have surgery, so your breasts look evenly shaped.

• Made with softer, lighter materials. This means less weight is put on your chest.

• Used with most regular bras. You do not need to change how you dress to wear them. This can reduce the stress of buying new clothes.
Custom-made breast prostheses are the most helpful choice for some women. Among other groups of women, custom-made breast prostheses can be helpful to:

- Women who have large breasts. Women who have large breasts often prefer custom-made breast prostheses and get relief from the lightweight material they are made with.

- Women who have lymphedema. Lymphedema is swelling caused by radiation treatment or surgery to remove your lymph nodes (small, bean-shaped vessels that can be found all over your body).

  Women who have lymphedema often prefer custom-made breast prostheses because the lightweight material does not irritate or bother their swelling.

- Women who have a bilateral mastectomy (surgery to remove most or all of both breasts). Women who have this surgery will often have asymmetrical (uneven) breasts after it. Since it is harder to get symmetry (make both breasts even) with ready-made breast prostheses, a custom-made breast prostheses helps to restore their image.

Things you should know about custom-made breast prostheses:

- They should be made by someone who is trained in making them. This type of specialist is called a Certified Clinical Anaplastologist (an expert at making custom-made prostheses for a person’s unique shape).

- To get a custom-made breast prostheses made, you will need to meet with the specialist many times. It is important to find a specialist you find easy to work with and someone who will listen to all your needs and concerns.

  To help you choose a specialist, ask to see samples of their work or to speak with former clients.

- Someone who only meets with you once to make a copy of your chest wall, and then gets your prosthesis made elsewhere, is not giving you a fully custom-made prosthesis.
If you choose to buy a custom-made breast prosthesis, work with someone who:

- Answers all of your questions.
- Is open to your input.
- Allows you to see stages of the prosthesis as it is being designed before it is done. This will allow you to try on early stages of the design. Be sure you are happy with the results.
- Creates “test models” while your prosthesis is being made. This allows you to try the models on with regular bras and clothing to see if you like the size and shape.

You can then adjust the prosthesis shape and fit before the final model is made. This will ensure that you get a custom-made breast prosthesis that you are happy with.

- If you have private insurance, ask the specialist who is making the custom-made breast prosthesis for help getting financial assistance from your insurance company. They have experience with this and can make it easier for you.

**How do I begin choosing the best long-term breast prosthesis for me?**

Women who have had breast surgery have unique needs. Not all women who have had breast surgery will need a breast prosthesis. Not all women who choose to wear a long-term breast prosthesis will choose the same kind.

Choosing the right breast prosthesis after breast surgery can be tough. It is important that the breast prosthesis you choose is comfortable (fits you well) and fits the bras you wear. A breast prosthesis that fits you well can help restore your image and will evenly match the breast that did not have surgery.

Before buying a breast prosthesis, talk to a member of your health care team (for example, nurse, occupational therapist, physical therapist) about any concerns or questions you may have. They can help you to begin choosing the breast prosthesis that best suits you.
Can I go swimming while wearing a ready-made or custom-made breast prosthesis?

Yes. After breast surgery, you do not have to use a special swimsuit. But you may find that your breast prosthesis fits some swimsuits better than others.

Keep a few things in mind before swimming:

- Try not to use a breast prosthesis made of silicone. Chlorine (chemical used to clean pools) can damage silicone breast prostheses.

- If you are swimming in water with chlorine, use a mastectomy swimsuit (swimsuit with area for prosthesis) that can get wet and be used in chlorine.

- You can get stylish mastectomy swimsuits that are made with pockets on either side. Keep your breast prosthesis in the pockets when swimming.

- If you are not swimming in a pool, like on a beach, you can wear normal breast prostheses. But a normal prosthesis is heavier than a prosthesis made for swimming.

- Swimsuits will stretch-out when wet, so make sure your swimsuit is snug (fits tight, but not too tight) enough to keep your breast prosthesis in place.

- When you try on swimsuits, move around and lie down to make sure your prosthesis stays in place.

If you do not like the look or cut of mastectomy swimsuits, try on non-mastectomy swimsuits that have removal pads. You can put in your own breast prosthesis or sew pockets in.

Can I go swimming with a custom-made breast prosthesis?

Yes. Custom-made breast prostheses can be used in water with chlorine or in hot tubs, without being damaged. If you have one, you do not need to use a different prosthesis for swimming.
A custom-made swim suit can be made to your liking and made with pockets to hold your breast prosthesis. Talk to the specialist making your custom-made breast prosthesis about this.

Below is an example of a custom-made swim suit with a breast prosthesis inside it and the many parts it can have.

Do I have to pay for ready-made or custom breast prostheses?

Yes. But you can get financial support to help cover the cost of ready-made and custom-made breast prostheses.

- Everyone in Ontario with a valid Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) card, who needs breast prosthesis due to surgery, can get a grant (money) from the Ministry of Health’s Assistive Devices Program (ADP).

  This grant helps cover the cost of buying ready-made or custom-made breast prostheses. Visit this website for details on how to apply for the grant: http://bit.ly/1Kllhn5H

- Some community programs help pay for mastectomy bras, breast prostheses, and swimwear to use after breast surgery.
Read more about these programs in the pamphlet called, “Know where to buy bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery”. Ask a member of your health care team for a copy, or visit the Patient & Family Library (main floor of the Princess Margaret) to pick one up.

Visit this web page to read the pamphlet online:
http://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/Know where to buy bras after breast surgery.pdf

- If you have concerns about money and buying bras or breast prostheses, ask a member of your health care team to refer you to (book a visit with) a hospital social worker. A social worker can help you with this.

- If you have private health insurance, check to see if they cover the costs of these products before you contact the stores. Or use a bra and breast prostheses store that has worked with your insurance company before.

**Where can I get ready-made or custom breast prostheses?**

There are many makers of breast forms and each store may carry different brands of breast prostheses. Read the pamphlet called “Know where to buy bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery” for a list of stores where you could buy different brands and types of prostheses.

If you have an allergy to silicone, the list includes stores that sell non-silicone breast prostheses. For example, there is a type of small, lightweight, breast prosthesis that has a cloth cover with plastic pellets inside.

**Important:** Non-silicone breast prostheses cannot be bought with the breast prosthesis grant from the Ministry of Health’s Assistive Devices Program (ADP).
For women having breast reconstructive surgery

Breast reconstructive surgery re-builds the breast shape so that it is about the same size and shape as it was before it was removed. Not all women will have breast reconstructive surgery.

If you have had or are having breast reconstructive surgery, read below to know what kind of bra and breast prostheses to use.

**What kind of bra should I use after breast reconstructive surgery?**

- If asked by your surgeon, wear a supportive, post-surgery bra meant for after breast reconstruction. This type of bra has velcro straps that cross your chest for support. Read the pamphlet called “Know where to buy bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery” for a list of stores that sell these bras.

Wearing a soft, front-closing sports bra is a better option after breast reconstruction. Do not use an underwire bra for many months after reconstruction, and remove the underwire from any bras you wear during this time.

Talk to your surgeon or surgical nurse about what bras will best meet your needs.
What breast prostheses should I use if I have a breast tissue expander?

Women may get breast implants (gel-like or fluid sacs put into the breast to add size and shape) during reconstructive breast surgery. To make room for the breast implant(s), women may have a tissue expander put in.

Stores that make ready-made breast prostheses also make breast prostheses for people who have a breast tissue expander. This type of breast prosthesis is made with a hollow back surface and many inserts that can be removed from the back of the prosthesis as the volume (size) of your tissue expander increases.

What breast prostheses should I use with asymmetrical (uneven) breasts?

Along with breast reconstruction surgery, some women may choose to get fitted for a ready-made partial breast prosthesis. Using a ready-made partial breast prosthesis can help to balance any differences in breast size before, during or after breast reconstruction.

Custom-made breast prostheses can also be used to fix differences in breast size before, during, and after breast reconstruction.
When should I use a nipple prosthesis after breast reconstruction surgery?

A nipple prosthesis is an artificial (not real) shape that is made to look like a natural (real) nipple. They are worn over the skin to replace a nipple, or worn as part of a nipple that may have been moved or removed during breast surgery.

Sometimes a woman will have breast reconstruction surgery and not have nipple reconstruction. In other cases, the nipple reconstruction is delayed.

Nipple prostheses are a good option if you had breast reconstruction surgery without nipple reconstruction. This is because the nipple would have been removed or changed.

Nipple prostheses are often:

- Made with a soft silicone that sticks to your breast without needing glue.
- Used with special prosthetic glues which are very strong. Use prosthetic glues to make sure the nipple prosthesis sticks to the skin for many days without coming off. Prosthetic glue can be used when swimming or in a hot tube.

You can buy ready-made, self-sticking nipple prostheses from one of the mastectomy product stores.

Custom-made nipple prostheses can be made to look very real and match your other nipple if you had breast reconstruction on only one breast. A set of 2 nipples can be made for women who had a bilateral reconstruction (breast reconstruction on both breasts) to suit their needs.

Custom-made nipple prostheses are made by the same expert who makes custom-made breast prostheses.
Read “Know where to buy bras and breast prostheses after breast surgery” for details on how to get financial help to buy nipple prostheses along with a full list of stores. Ask a member of your health care team for a copy, or visit the Patient & Family Library (main floor of the Princess Margaret) to pick one up.

Visit this web page to read the pamphlet online:
http://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health Information/Health Topics/Documents/Know where to buy bras after breast surgery.pdf

**Who can I call to get more information?**

If you have any questions about what bras or breast prostheses to use after breast surgery, contact the Princess Margaret’s Cancer Survivorship Clinic (2nd floor of the Princess Margaret):

📞 416-946-4501, extension 2363
✉️ survivorship@uhn.ca

Ask to speak with one of the clinic staff members.