



# Breast Cancer Reconstruction Surgery

## What is Breast Cancer Reconstruction Surgery?

- In order to surgically treat breast cancer or to prevent cancer if you have a high risk of getting breast cancer, your surgeon may recommend a mastectomy, which is the removal of your breast.
- Breast reconstruction is surgery to rebuild your breast after a mastectomy.

## Timing of Breast Reconstruction Surgery

- For some people, breast reconstruction can be done at the same time as your mastectomy. This is called immediate reconstruction. Breast reconstruction can also be done at a later time. This is called delayed reconstruction.
- Immediate reconstruction is not always possible. Here are some reasons why immediate reconstruction may not work for you:
  - You have inflammatory breast cancer
  - Cancer is found in your lymph nodes
  - You may choose to delay breast reconstruction surgery until fully recovered from mastectomy or other personal issues
  - You need radiation treatment quickly after your mastectomy surgery
- If you have radiation to the breast you may need to wait at least 1 year after your breast is removed before having delayed breast reconstruction. This may reduce your risk of serious problems after surgery.
- Talk to your health care team about the best timing for your breast reconstruction.

## What is used to rebuild the breast?

### 1. Saline or silicone implants

- There are a lot of factors involved in choosing an implant. You may need a temporary saline filled tissue expander first that is filled over time and then replaced with a permanent implant at a second stage. You might be able to have a permanent implant right away. Implants come in many shapes and sizes.

### 2. Your own body tissue

- Tissue from your body (autologous tissue) is taken from your stomach, back, thighs or buttock to rebuild your breast.

### 3. Implants and body tissue

- Implants and/or body tissue may be used for either immediate or delayed reconstruction.
- In some cases, it may be possible to keep your breast skin (skin-sparing mastectomy), or your skin, nipple and areola (nipple-sparing mastectomy) if you are having immediate reconstruction, but this should be discussed further with your surgeon.

## Is follow-up required?

- You need to follow-up with your health care team and have regular check-ups with a physical examination of your chest wall and breasts.
- You may need imaging if you have changes or unusual symptoms in your reconstructed breast, such as lumps or skin changes.

## Can everyone have breast reconstruction surgery?

- Breast reconstruction may not be possible for everyone. For example, breast reconstruction is not recommended if you are a smoker, have a medical condition such as obesity or diabetes, or your cancer is at an advanced stage.
- These factors can put you at a greater risk of serious problems after surgery and will be taken into consideration, along with your preferences and the recommendations of your surgeon when determining the type of breast reconstruction that is right for you.

## Who should I talk to about breast reconstruction surgery options?

- Your health care team can give you the best information about your breast reconstruction options based on your personal medical situation.
- It is important that you understand and feel comfortable with your options for breast reconstruction. If you have concerns of questions, talk to a member of your health care team.

### Additional Resources:

**Canadian Cancer Society:** <http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/breast/supportive-care/>

**Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation:** <http://www.bra-day.com/breast-reconstruction/>