

Beauty and the Breast

Throughout a woman's life her breasts change. Changes come in many different forms. Small breasts may become large during pregnancy and remain large; large breasts can deflate and droop later in life; breast development may never even happen. As luck, and plastic surgeons, would have it, all of these scenarios have solutions.

Breast surgery should center on the four **S's: Size, Shape, Symmetry and Scars.**

A woman's breast **SIZE** needs to be in proportion to her body's size. This means that the same-sized breast will result in completely different proportions on a larger woman versus on a smaller woman. Proper proportions, whether it's breasts, noses or waists, are very important when achieving the ultimate aesthetic. A medium C cup tends to be the most versatile size; it can be most easily dressed up or down, like a great pair of shoes. A mid-C can be accentuated with a push up bra and low neckline to look larger, or easily concealed beneath a billowy blouse for a more conservative appearance.

SHAPE concerns tend to do with droopiness or "ptosis" (doctors have a technical name for everything). If we all lived long enough, gravity would turn our bodies into amorphous puddles on the ground. So, consider how this fact applies to a woman's breast tissue over time. Looser fat replaces firmer tissue over the course of her lifetime, and the skin enveloping the breasts loses a lot of its snap. It's no wonder that many women seek out surgical options to correct ptosis. These procedures focus on moving the nipple-areola complex up and creating upper breast fullness while minimizing the excess hanging tissue below the breast's lower crease.

SYMMETRY is very subjective, as no two breasts are ever truly identical. The goal of cosmetic breast surgery is to achieve "like" breasts. Parameters such as the distances from the collarbone to the nipples, the diameters of the nipple-areola complexes and, of course, cup sizes should achieve a certain level of similarity. Often, different techniques are employed in the operating room to make asymmetric breasts more similar. This may require lifting one breast while the other needs lifting and reducing. All of these differences, and their respective treatments, need to be discussed in front of a mirror between you and your plastic surgeon.

SCARS can be the most important of the four S's to women and their partners. What's the use of changing the size, shape or symmetry if the final outcome isn't as seamless as you'd hoped? It is important to be very careful when dealing with noticeable scars. Before-and-after photos of other patients can be helpful when considering various breast procedures. Close, intimate follow-up with your plastic surgeon is imperative to the healing phase. Ensure that your doctor guides and educates you about doing everything possible to achieve minimum scarring.

With these four S's as a starting point, you can begin to consider whether breast surgery is right for you. Always make sure your physician is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, as there are many surgeons performing these procedures who are not properly accredited.

—DONALD ROLAND, M.D.

Board-certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon

CURE BEGINS WITH PREVENTION

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but it's extremely important to maintain this awareness every day throughout the year. Breast self-examination is very important and should be performed routinely. Studies have shown that 10–15 percent of women with breast cancer may find a lump that can be missed by imaging studies. Additionally, the earlier a cancer is discovered, the more effective the treatment can be.

Age is the single greatest risk factor for breast cancer. Eighty percent of all breast cancers are diagnosed in women over the age of 50. Because of this, it is

recommended that all women over 40 years of age have an annual mammogram.

Encouragingly, the incidence of breast cancer has actually decreased slightly in the past decade. Self-examination and improvements in mammography, breast ultrasound and breast MRI have resulted in improved detection rates.

Remember, don't pass on your yearly mammogram. Why not do it as a gift to yourself every year on your birthday?

—DR. ROBBI KEMPNER, M.D. FACS

Chief of Breast Surgery for the Downtown Hospital

“A woman's breast size needs to be in proportion to her body's size.”

Photographed by Lana De Doncker. Model from Red Models. Hair and makeup by Jhoanna Thirz.

