



MIDWEST

Breast & Aesthetic Surgery

Tissue Expanders/Implants

Breast reconstruction can be accomplished by using prosthetic, implanted devices. Some general concepts include:

- Implants are either filled with silicone or saline
- Positioned under the skin and pectoralis muscle
- Can be done in multiple stages or as a single step

Single Stage Reconstruction or Straight-to- implant

Tissue-sparing mastectomy techniques, such as the skin-sparing and nipple-sparing procedures, remove mainly the breast tissue while leaving much of the skin of breast and chest intact. If an adequate amount of skin is spared, it is sometimes possible to avoid the initial expander stage and place the permanent implant at the time of mastectomy.

- Ideal for patients with larger breasts seeking a smaller breast size after reconstruction
- Best done immediately after mastectomy
 - Generally not an option for delayed reconstruction

Staged Reconstruction

A traditional mastectomy procedure removes the breast tissue and skin, leaving a relatively flat surface on the chest. In such cases, the staged approach with initial tissue expansion is necessary to expand skin and create a space for the permanent implant.

Step 1: Tissue Expander

- A silicone device that is placed under the chest muscle
- Once a week, saline is injected into the filling port of the expander
- Over approximately 8 weeks, the expander gradually stretches the tissue
- When expansion is complete, the expander is left in place for 4-6 months

Step 2: Tissue expander is removed and replaced with a permanent implant

- Requires a second, smaller surgery that is usually outpatient
- No new incisions or scars for this stage

Length of operation

- 1-2 hours
- The surgery to remove the breast, the mastectomy, would be performed by another surgeon before this breast reconstruction surgery and is not included in the 1-2 hours

Length of hospital stay

- Usually 2 days

Recovery Period

- 2-3 weeks

Scars

- We will use the same incision as the mastectomy scar, which typically runs in the middle of the breast.

Advantages

- Less scarring--the tissue expander and implant are inserted through the original mastectomy scar.
- Less post-operative pain.
- Shorter surgery and recovery time.

Risks

- The most common risks are infection and firmness of the implant, known as capsular contracture
- Skin wrinkling and leaking of the implant can also occur

Ideal for Patients who

- Do not have enough back or abdominal tissue for reconstruction
- Have small breasts
- Plan on reconstruction of both breasts (bilateral reconstruction)

Things to consider

- Weekly visits are needed for tissue expansion for about 8 weeks
- Multiple surgeries are common with implant reconstruction due to complications
- More difficult to achieve a natural appearance and feel of breast compared to reconstruction with natural tissue