

## **BREAST REDUCTION**

You may be a good candidate for breast reduction if you have one or more of the following conditions:

- breasts that are too large in proportion to your body frame
- heavy, pendulous breasts with nipples and areolas that point downward one breast is much larger than the other
- back, neck or shoulder pain caused by the weight of your breasts
- skin irritation beneath your breasts
- indentations in your shoulders from tight bra straps
- restriction of physical activity due to the size and weight of your breasts
- dissatisfaction or self-consciousness about the largeness of your breasts

Breast reduction can be performed at any age, but usually we recommend waiting until breast development has stopped. Childbirth and breast-feeding may have significant and unpredictable effects on the size and shape of your breasts. Nevertheless, many women decide to undergo breast reduction before having children and feel that they can address any subsequent changes later. If you plan to breast-feed in the future, you should discuss this with us.

During the consultation, you will be asked about your desired breast size as well as anything else about your breasts that you would like to see improved.

### **ALL SURGERY CARRIES SOME UNCERTAINTY AND RISK**

Fortunately, significant complications from breast reduction are infrequent. Every year, many thousands of women undergo successful breast reduction surgery, experience no major problems and are pleased with the results. Anyone considering surgery, however, should be aware of both the benefits

and the risks.

Some of the potential complications that may be discussed with you include bleeding, infection and reactions to anesthesia. Rarely, a patient may require a blood transfusion during the operation. This usually can be anticipated in advance, and your plastic surgeon may, under certain circumstances, advise you to donate your own blood in preparation for surgery.

Following reduction, sometimes the breasts may not be perfectly symmetrical or the nipple height may vary slightly. If desired, minor adjustments can be made at a later time. Permanent loss of sensation in the nipples or breasts may occur rarely. Revisionary surgery is sometimes helpful in certain instances where incisions may have healed poorly. In the unlikely event of injury to or loss of the nipple and areola, they usually can be satisfactorily reconstructed using skin grafts.

### **PLANNING YOUR SURGERY**

We will examine your breasts, taking measurements and perhaps photographs for your medical record. The size and shape of your breasts, the quality of your skin, and the placement of the nipples and areolas will be carefully evaluated.

You should come to the consultation prepared to discuss your medical history. This will include information about any medical conditions, drug allergies, medical treatments you have received, previous surgeries including breast biopsies, and medications that you currently take. It is important for you to provide complete information.

You should tell us if you plan to lose a significant amount of weight, particularly if you have noticed that your breasts become smaller with weight loss.

### **PREPARING FOR SURGERY**

Depending on your age, or if you have a history of breast cancer in your family, we may recommend a baseline mammogram before surgery and another mammographic examination some months after surgery. This will help to detect any future changes in your breast tissue. Following breast reduction, you will still be able to perform breast self-examination. Breast reduction surgery will not increase your risk of developing breast cancer.

If you are a smoker, you will be asked to stop smoking well in advance of surgery. Aspirin and certain anti-inflammatory drugs can cause increased bleeding, so you should avoid taking these medications for a period of time before surgery. Your surgeon will provide you with additional preoperative instructions.

Whether you are released the day of surgery or the following day, you will need someone to drive you home and to stay with you for the next day or two.

## **ABOUT THE OPERATION**

The operation is performed under general anesthesia and needs 1-2 days in the clinic.

Individual factors and personal preferences will determine the specific technique selected to reduce the size of your breasts.

The most common method of reducing the breasts what we are doing actually is the short vertical scar technique. This leaves a scar around the areola and vertical from this down to the inframammary crease. We try to avoid the anchor-like scar, although in very big or saggy breasts has to be done.

After the excess breast tissue, fat and skin, have been removed the nipple and areola are shifted to a higher position. The areola, which in large breasts usually has been stretched, also is reduced in size. Skin that was

formerly located above the nipple is brought down and together to reshape the breast. Liposuction may be used to improve the contour under the arm. Usually, the nipples and areolas remain attached to underlying mounds of tissue, and this allows for the preservation of sensation. The ability to breast-feed may also be preserved by this method, although this cannot be guaranteed.

Rarely, if your breasts are extremely large, the nipples and areolas may need to be completely detached before they are shifted to a higher level. In such a case, you will need to have made the decision to sacrifice sensation and the possibility of breast-feeding in order to achieve your desired breast size.

In many instances, small drain tubes will have been placed in your breasts to help avoid the accumulation of fluids. Gauze dressings will be placed on your breasts and covered with an elastic bandage.

### **AFTER THE SURGERY**

The day after surgery, you will be encouraged to get out of bed for short periods of time. After several days, you will be able to move about more comfortably. Straining, bending and lifting must be avoided, however, since these activities might cause increased swelling or even bleeding. You may be instructed to sleep on your back to avoid pressure on your breasts.

Any surgical drains will be removed a day or two after surgery, at which time your dressings may also be changed or removed. You will be instructed to wear a support bra for a few weeks, until the swelling and discoloration of your breasts diminishes. Generally, stitches will be removed in stages over a period of approximately three weeks, beginning about one week after surgery.

You may notice that you feel less sensation in the nipple and areola areas. This usually is temporary. It may, however, take weeks, months or even more than a year before sensation returns to normal. Your breasts may also

require some time to assume a more natural shape. Incisions will initially be red or pink in color. They will remain this way for many months following surgery.

### **GETTING BACK TO NORMAL**

After breast reduction surgery, it is often possible to return to work within just a couple of weeks, depending on your job. In many instances, you can resume most of your normal activities, including some form of mild exercise, after several weeks. You may continue to experience some mild, periodic discomfort during this time, but such feelings are normal. Severe pain should be reported to your doctor.

Any sexual activity should be avoided for a minimum of one week, and your plastic surgeon may advise you to wait longer. After that, care must be taken to be extremely gentle with your breasts for at least the next six weeks.

### **YOUR NEW LOOK**

Breast reduction surgery will make your breasts smaller and firmer. Without the excessive weight of large breasts, you may find greater enjoyment in playing sports and engaging in physical activity.

The incisions from your breast reduction surgery will heal and fade over time. It is important to realize, however, that the incision lines will be permanently visible, more so in some individuals than others. Fortunately, the incisions for breast reduction are in locations easily concealed by clothing, even low-cut necklines.

Breast reduction often makes a dramatic change in your appearance. For this reason, it may take some time to adjust to your new body image. Most women, however, eventually become comfortable with their smaller breasts and feel very pleased with the results of surgery. In fact, the level of patient satisfaction resulting from breast reduction is among the highest of any

plastic surgery procedure.

Unless you gain or lose a significant amount of weight or become pregnant, your breast size should remain fairly constant. However, gravity and the effects of aging will eventually alter the size and shape of virtually every woman's breasts. If, after a period of years, you become dissatisfied with the appearance of your breasts, you may choose to undergo a breast "lifting" procedure to restore their more youthful contour.

Your satisfaction with a breast reduction is likely to be greater if you understand the procedure thoroughly and if your expectations are realistic.