



somnio

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

**BREAST
SURGERY
RECOVERY GUIDE**

This breast surgery recovery guide is available for clients who are having breast augmentation (breast implant) as well as other breast surgery. The booklet has been reproduced here as an online reference for clients and to provide information about your recovery period and answer frequently asked questions related to your breast implant surgery.

Recovery

Walk around as soon as you are able while recovering from breast augmentation surgery. This will help prevent blood clots and can also help relieve swelling. Do not engage in strenuous activities, or exercise, for at least three to four weeks after your surgery. You should plan to avoid activities which require much raising of the arms above the level of the head for 10 days after surgery. With great care, you can drive about 7 days after surgery. Patients can usually return to work in a few days unless their occupation requires any particularly strenuous movements and lifting. In such cases, 3-4 weeks should be allowed.

- Walking can commence within days
- Light jogging within 2 weeks
- Gym and Pilates after 4 weeks and
- Upper body weights 6 weeks

After Surgery

First Days after Surgery

Rest, but not bed rest:

While rest is important in the early stages of healing, equally important is that you are ambulatory, meaning that you are walking under your own strength. Spend 10 minutes every 2 hours engaged in light walking indoors as you recover.

Recline with your head and chest slightly elevated above your lower body.

Good nutrition:

Fluids are critical following surgery. Stick to non-carbonated, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free, and green tea-free beverages including fruit juices and water, milk, and yogurt drinks. You must consume at least 1 big glass of fluid every 2 hours. Stick with soft, bland, nutritious food for the first 24 hours.

Take all medication:

Exactly as prescribed, Use oral pain medication and muscle relaxants as needed. Take the entire course of antibiotics.

Change your incision dressings:

Your incisions will seep fluid and some blood for a short time after surgery. Keep dressings clean and dry.

Wear a support surgical garment around the clock:

Ensure that you wear this garment at all times.

Do not smoke:

Smoking can greatly impair your safety prior to surgery and your ability to heal following surgery. While incisions may have sealed, smoking deprives your body of necessary oxygen that can result in poorly healed, wide, raised scars.

Do not drink alcohol:

Alcohol consumption whilst taking the antibiotics may diminish the effect the antibiotics have on your body.

Relax:

Do not engage in any stressful activities. Do not lift anything heavier than 5Kg. During this time you will progress with each day that passes. Ease into your daily activities. Continue to wear a proper support bra. You may sleep flat. However do not sleep on your stomach. If you are a side sleeper, a soft pillow under your mid-back and shoulders may offer more comfort and support than a single pillow under your head.

Practice good sun protection:

Do not expose your breasts to direct sunlight. If you are outdoors, apply at least an SPF 30 to the chest area at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. Your chest region and breast skin are highly susceptible to sunburn or the formation of irregular, darkened pigmentation. You may start to use scar treatments after sutures are removed.

Do not engage in activities that cause your breasts to bounce or move up and down:

This includes speed boat tours, elephant trekking, parasailing, and similar activities, as this can cause excess stretching of the skin.

Breast Massage

Follow your surgeon's instructions regarding massage of your implants.

In some cases the recommendation may be light massage or no massage at all. When doing massage, remember to move your implant in all the four quadrants using a slow steady movement.

1. Position your palms on the outer quadrants of your breasts and press slowly inward. You can feel and see the implants bulge toward the inner quadrants of the breast. Press and hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat according to the instructions from your surgeon.
2. Press the breasts slowly outward such that a bulge on the outward quadrants of the breast will be noted. Press and hold for 20 to 30 seconds, repeat.
3. Position your palms on the lower quadrants of the breast and push slowly upward. Bulging of the implant on the upper quadrants of the breast should be noted. Press and hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat. Do the same for the downward movement.

Following Surgery

Are They All You Dreamed They Would Be?

In the days and weeks right after your surgery, your breasts will be quite firm and will sit high up on your chest. Don't worry. They will soften up and will drop. Remember, the breast on your dominant side (your right side, if you are right-handed) may not drop as fast as the breast on your non-dominant side. In the weeks and months following your breast augmentation procedure, your breasts may appear "off" in shape or position. They also may feel itchy or sensitive. This is because your skin has been stretched over the implants, making your breasts very firm and high. The full results of your breast augmentation won't be seen completely for many weeks, so be patient.

Drains after Your Breast Augmentation Recovery

Your surgeon may have placed one or more drains in your incision to remove excess fluid. (The fluid may be pinkish or brownish.) These thin plastic tubes may be left in place over night after surgery. There may be a little irritation around the edges of the incision due to the drain.

Caring for Breast Implant Incisions

After the surgery the surgeon will place waterproof plasters over your incision sites. Keep your incisions/suture line dry. If the plaster should get wet or start to peel off we recommend that you contact the PPSI office to make an appointment to have the wounds cleaned and redressed.

It is important not to sweat into the incision while it is healing. Therefore curtail activity and sun tanning until after the incision is healed and sealed. Don't over-do activity, especially of the upper body, too early. Let your body rest and heal. You want to minimize swelling around the implant. Do not get your incision wet between the time of your surgery and until the stitches have been removed.

Scars

All breast augmentation techniques will leave a permanent scar behind, which is meant to be as inconspicuous as possible after healing. Though uncommon, extensive scarring is a possible complication of breast augmentation. Remember that your scars will get worse before they get better. Your incision will heal, but scars go through a series of changes before they are completely healed and that can take months. Scarring is the result of the body's attempt to heal the site of a cut, burn, or other wound. When the body heals from injury it produces an overabundance of collagen, which forms a scar. This production of collagen is kept in check by an enzyme aptly named collagenase that melts collagen away. During the initial healing process the interaction of these substances determine the nature and extent of scarring. Avoid direct sunlight. Your scars will continue to refine. If they become raised, red or thickened, or appear to widen, contact your Doctor. Early intervention is important to achieving well-healed scars. Scars are generally refined to fine incision lines one year after surgery.

Bathing

You will be able to shower but not swim until your incisions are closed and your sutures have been removed.

Tip: You may not be able to wash your hair for a week because you should not raise your hands over your head. Wash your hair the night before your surgery and braid it or place it in a ponytail.

Loss of Sensitivity

You may lose some sensitivity in the nipple or the surrounding skin after breast augmentation surgery. This usually subsides within a few weeks. In rare cases, however, loss of sensation can be permanent. As sensation returns to your nipples and breasts, you may experience sharp pains, itchiness, heat, tingling and prickling. These temporary sensations occur because nerve function is returning.

Nipple Over sensitivity

Many women complain of very erect and sensitive nipples after breast implant surgery. You can protect your nipples by using a Band-Aid (especially the large round ones), large corn pads, or nursing pads. These pads will protect your overly sensitive nipples from the abrasiveness of your clothing and shield your erect nipples.

Breast Noises: Squeaks and Gurgles

Do not be alarmed if you hear gurgling, buzzing, or crackling noises coming from your augmented breasts.

These noises may result from fluid build-up or air bubbles within the implant pocket. They can also be heard when the implant has not settled. This will likely pass in a few weeks.

Risks

All plastic surgery procedures carry some risk including breast implant or breast reconstruction surgery. Having your procedure done in an accredited hospital minimises your risk during a procedure. The best way to categorize risks is to divide them into the risks of having a general anaesthetic, things that can go wrong during the procedure, things that might happen in the first few weeks and things that might happen further down the track. Generally speaking, patients undergoing elective surgery have very minimal risk, provided due care and attention is attended to by your clinical care team and by you as a patient. When you are admitted to the hospital you will be provided with a consent package that details these risks, but the following is a quick list. The following is not meant to frighten you but to make you aware of the possibilities.

Because breast enlargement is a totally elective operation, you must be in good health before going ahead with the procedure. Eat healthily with plenty of fruits and vegetables, keep fit and have plenty of rest. Should you have some illness (eg the flu) before the date of the surgery, our surgeons may postpone the procedure until you have recovered fully.

General Risks

Smoking: Smoking increases the risks of all potential complications. This includes chest infections and poor wound healing. You should stop smoking 4 weeks before and 4 weeks after the surgery.

Risks of having a general anaesthetic

- Areas of lung collapse and pneumonia
- Clots in the legs (DVT) which can move to the lungs (Pulmonary Embolism)
- Allergies
- Awareness
- Death (risk in about one in a million, you are at more risk driving to and from the hospital)

Things that can go wrong in the operation

- Bleeding
- Damage to surrounding structures
- Things that might happen in the first few weeks
- Collections of fluid or blood within your abdomen
- Sensation changes to the breast or nipple
- Firmness
- Delayed healing
- Bruising and swelling
- Irritation from dressings
- Nipple Sensation
- Nerve injury

Things that might happen long term

- Poor scars
- Asymmetry
- Skin contour irregularities (stretch marks, rippling and wrinkles)
- Changes in size and shape with age & weight fluctuations
- Capsular contracture

During your consultation, your specialist plastic surgeon will explain all these risks, what they do to avoid and treat them, and the rates at which they occur.

Capsular Contracture

All surgeries have risks, and breast augmentation is no exception. Capsular contracture occurs when scar tissue forms around the implant, resulting in painful breast stiffness and possible leakage of the fluid inside the implant. Women often fear this common complication because it is difficult to predict when it will occur and who will develop it. Most women start having symptoms around three months after their breast implant surgery, but you can develop capsular contracture at any time, and it can recur after it is treated. Capsular contracture occurs in less than 5 percent of women, and while there is no way of telling who is going to develop it, several factors may increase your risk.

They include:

- Autoimmune disorders
- Smoking
- Radiation therapy
- Severe trauma to the breast
- Hematoma (a break in blood vessel, causing localized bruising or blood clot)
- Seroma (a collection of fluid under the skin)
- Bacterial infections
- Silicone molecules leaching into the pocket around the implant

Detecting Capsular Contracture

Warning signs of capsular contracture include deformed, misshapen, and painful breasts, or breasts that are firmer than when they were first implanted. There are four levels of capsular contracture.

They include:

- Grade I: the breast is soft and looks natural
- Grade II: the breast is slightly firm, but looks normal
- Grade III: the breast is firm and looks abnormal
- Grade IV: the breast is hard, painful, and looks abnormal

Mammograms and Your Breast Implants

The recommended screening guidelines for women who have had breast augmentation with breast implants solely for cosmetic reasons are the same as those for women who do not have breast implants. Cosmetic breast augmentation with implants may make screening for breast cancer a bit more challenging, but this is not an excuse to avoid regular screening. A mammogram (breast X-ray) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can save your life, so follow your doctor's advice regarding breast cancer detection.

Breast Feeding

Implants do not interfere with breast-feeding, but many women have had concerns about passing silicone gel into breast milk if their implants were to rupture. These fears have been allayed by science. In the early 1990s, there were reports of silicone gel leaking from implants into the body, and some women claimed that their autoimmune and connective tissue disorders were related to their implants. As a result, silicone implants were removed from the market in 1992. At the same time, fear arose that breast-feeding with silicone implants could endanger the infant. Studies have since shown that silicone molecules are too large to pass into the milk ducts and breast gland tissue. In addition, the FDA conducted numerous studies which served to exonerate silicone gel implants as a cause of disease. As a result, they returned to market

in 2006. That said, there are no guarantees that you will be able to breast-feed, regardless of whether you undergo breast augmentation. Women who have never had any kind of breast surgery may experience difficulty breast-feeding.

If you do opt to have breast surgery, incision and implant placement may make a difference in terms of your ability to breast-feed. For example, in rare cases a periareolar incision (around the edge of the nipple) may interrupt or disturb the milk ducts. Placing implants below the pectoral (chest) muscle is least likely to disturb the milk duct. Discuss your plans to breast-feed with your surgeon. Your surgeon will be able to work with you to achieve the best possible aesthetic results without compromising your plans to breast-feed.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I get sick and can't keep my medicine down?

Taking your medication with food and water can help you keep it down during breast augmentation recovery. If you simply cannot keep your medications down, tell your surgeon or contact PIAC. You may need to have your prescription changed.

I am a very active person. How long should I wait after breast augmentation until I resume exercising?

Talk to your surgeon about when you can resume exercising after breast augmentation. Individual instructions may vary, but the usual advice is to wait at least two weeks. Although you may feel fine, you will not be completely healed at this stage. Doing too much too soon can set back your healing. You should not lift heavy objects, bend over, or take part in vigorous activities for at least three weeks after breast augmentation.

How long before my breast implants drop?

For most women, breast implants rest a bit high for a short period after surgery, and then they drop into a more normal position. This usually takes a few weeks. The time it takes your breast implants to drop depends upon several factors, including the implant size, what size you were before your breast augmentation surgery, the implant surface type, implant placement, your muscle tone and whether you massage your breasts. If your implants are placed underneath the chest muscle, they will drop slower than if they are placed over the muscle. If you had very small breasts before, and get moderate to large implants, they will take longer to drop because of the tightness of your skin. Sometimes, one side will drop before the other side.

Some surgeons advise patients to push their breast implants down or massage them soon after surgery to encourage them to drop. If you are having problems, your surgeon may have you wear a wide elastic band around the top of your chest to help push your implants down. If your implants still haven't dropped within six to nine months, breast augmentation revision surgery may be necessary. Talk to your surgeon.

Why do my breasts appear red and feel sunburned?

Your skin has been stretched to accommodate the breast implants. The sunburned feeling and red color are caused by this stretching. This is a normal part of the healing process. Ask your surgeon what he or she recommends for your skin during your breast implant recovery.

Why are my breasts shiny?

The shininess is a result of your skin being stretched. As your skin begins to relax, the shininess will go away.

How long after breast augmentation will my breasts soften up?

This depends on your muscle tone and the implant placement. Your breasts will be firm for a while because of the post-surgery swelling. Textured implants may feel firmer than smooth ones.

Am I too firm?

Firmness is relative. Some individuals think they are too firm when they are only slightly firmer than before, while others crave firmness and fullness around the top side of their breasts. There is no one-size-fits-all answer.

How soon can I go back to work after Surgery?

This depends on your job, your incision type, your implant placement, and how fast you heal. If you have a sedentary job, you can generally go back sooner than if your job is physically demanding. If you have had a lift, your breast lift recovery will make your overall recuperation more involved.

When can I tan my new breasts?

Tanning is not good for any part of your body, including your new breasts. Tanned skin is damaged skin. If you want to tan anyway, you are going to have to wait at least until your skin is no longer red and shiny. Tanning too early after your breast augmentation surgery can increase your risk of hyper pigmentation, a condition in which patches of skin become darker than the surrounding skin. Keep your incisions out of direct sunlight for six months to a year after surgery.

Scars take about one year to mature, so cover them! The skin on your breasts will also stretch out and heal before your scars, so if you start tanning, cover your scars with some kind of tape, not just sunblock.

My new breasts are squeaking and gurgling! Is this permanent? When will it stop?

Do not panic if you hear gurgling, squeaking or crackling noises coming from your new breasts. These noises can result from a fluid build-up or air bubbles within the implant pocket, or from the implant settling in. Give it a few weeks. Although the noises might be disturbing, this is normal after breast augmentation.

My breasts look like cones or torpedoes?

Your breasts may be odd looking because your skin has been stretched over them. Don't worry, this is likely temporary. If your breasts look like torpedoes, your implants probably haven't "dropped" yet. The lower half of each breast is probably still tight, forcing the breasts into a high, hard-cone shape. In the weeks immediately after your breast implant surgery, you may think your breasts are too big, too small, too round, not round enough, too square, too high, too low, too ugly, too this, and too that. This will pass in time. If your implants were placed under the chest muscles, it may take some time for the muscles to relax. If you are right-handed, your right breast may not drop as fast as your left one.

My breasts are too big! I hate them!

Take a deep breath. In the weeks after surgery, your breasts will be swollen and you will not be used to them yet. They may also be relatively high up on your chest. Wait until the swelling goes down before you decide that they are too big and/or that you want revision breast augmentation surgery.

When can I start jogging again?

You need to be fully healed before you can start jogging again. Activities like jogging, jumping rope, basketball and horseback riding subject your breasts to a lot of up-and-down movements. Jumping without good support for your breasts can stretch your skin, ligaments, and connective tissue, causing sagging. Talk to your surgeon before you take part in any strenuous activity. And when you do start up again, wear a good support bra or your compression bra.

When can I begin having sex again?

Sex is still exercise. You should not participate in any activities that can significantly raise your heart rate or cause excessive movement in your breasts for a week or two after your breast augmentation. The antibiotics that you are taking to prevent infection may interfere with your birth control pills, so use another form of protection while you are on antibiotics if you do not want to become pregnant.

How soon after surgery can I fly?

You will need to stay in Phuket near your surgeon for the first week of your breast implant recovery in case of complications. You will also need to be nearby for your follow-up appointments.

Will I have to sleep on my back or side forever?

No. Just like the swelling, pain and redness, this is only temporary. You should sleep on your back with your head elevated for the first five to 10 days after surgery to reduce your discomfort and swelling. You can sleep on your side or stomach after 10 days.

My breasts are numb. Will I ever have sensation again?

In almost all cases, the sensation in the skin does return after breast augmentation. The nerves in the skin have pressure on them from the swelling and from the skin being so tightly stretched over the implant. This pressure may temporarily numb the area. What's more, nerves around your incisions may be cut, and this can take longer to heal. As the breast envelope relaxes and your swelling subsides, you will notice sensation returning gradually. This may take up to a year.

When can I wear an underwired bra?

After the removal of the bandages you will be fitted with either a support bra or boob tube style garment (depending on the surgeon's recommendations). Do not wear underwire, 'push-up' bras or tight clothing for at least 1 month after the surgery (this may vary as per your surgeon's recommendations). The push up bras and tight clothing may cause the implants to be shifted into abnormal positions.

What will happen during pregnancy?

Every woman is an individual and therefore has different results whether before a pregnancy or after. Your breasts will enlarge and will go through all the usual changes associated with pregnancy. The amount of enlargement will vary from woman to woman and the size of the implant will factor into this as well.

What effect does smoking have on the healing process after surgery?

Smoking causes the blood vessels to constrict, reducing the blood supply and the oxygen carried by the blood to the surgical area. The tissues need this blood supply and the oxygen that the blood carries in order to heal. When the blood supply is reduced the tissues heal more slowly. PIAC requires that clients cease smoking 4 weeks before and 4 weeks after surgery.

How to prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

Deep Vein Thrombosis is the formation of a blood clot in a deep vein. To decrease the risk of developing DVT, patient should not be scheduled for surgery on the same day of arrival in Phuket.

For longer surgeries (more than 4 hours) the patient must stop their contraceptive pills as the anesthetic risk is increased as well as a higher risk of DVT.

For long flights, long surgery and long bed rest after the surgery, the patient must be encouraged to engage in light walking indoors. On your return flights, please make sure to drink plenty of water, limit alcohol intake and walk around the cabin or do calf exercises.

Call your doctor immediately if you have DVT symptoms including: swelling, warmth or tenderness in the soft tissues of your leg. Swelling may also appear as a swollen ridge along a blood vessel that you can feel.

How much does the implant weight?

The weight of an implant varies with size and fill volume. A 250cc implant filled with 250cc of gel weighs approximately 250 grams.

The water proof dressing peeled off. What should I do?

You can simply replace the water proof dressing with a new one provided that there is no abnormal drainage on the incision site. You have to make sure that the wound is clean and dry. If purulent drainage is present and the dressing is soaked, please contact your Somnio Coordinator or PPSI for assessment and treatment.

I am in so much pain. I couldn't sleep.

Pain is expected after the surgery as your tissues and nerves were traumatized.

However, if you are in extreme pain (7-10 out of 10 pain score) and the medications prescribed are not working, please contact PIAC for advice.

I feel nauseous and dizzy. Could this be because of the medication I am taking?

Some medications such as Opioid analgesics and antibiotics have these side effects. Please observe for 6-12 hours and if they are not relieved, please contact your Somnio Coordinator or PPSI for change of medication.

I'm 1 month post-BA and I can see some stitches on my incision site. What should I do?

All external non-absorbable stitches are removed by the surgeon during the follow-up visit. If there are remnant stitches, they should be the absorbable/dissolvable ones. This is not dangerous in any way, but we recommend that you contact a local clinic to have the stitch that pokes out removed or trimmed by a doctor, as it can cause delayed healing of your surgical wound.

These instructions are not meant to be comprehensive or all-inclusive, any additional instructions will be given to you by your Surgeon as needed.

