

Gynaecomastia Information Sheet

What Is Gynaecomastia?

Gynaecomastia is a common disorder of the male's breast where there is a benign glandular enlargement of that breast at some time in a male's life, affecting an estimated 40 – 60% of men. It usually consists of the appearance of a flat pad of glandular tissue behind the nipple that becomes tender at the same time; it may affect either one breast or both. Though certain drugs and medical problems have been linked with male breast over development, there is no known cause in the vast majority of cases.

For men who feel self-conscious about their appearance, breast reduction surgery can help. The procedure involves reduction of the breast tissue by excision of glandular tissue and/or fat removal by liposuction. In extreme cases excess skin is removed, resulting in a chest that is flatter, firmer and better contoured. The scar can usually be hidden along the border of the nipple, with the results of surgery being very successful.

Surgery to correct any Gynaecomastia can be performed on healthy, emotionally stable men of any age. The best candidates for surgery have firm, elastic skin that will reshape to the body's new contours. Surgery may be discouraged for obese or overweight men who have not first attempted to correct the problem with exercise or weight loss. Also, individuals who drink alcohol in excess or smoke marijuana are usually not considered good candidates for surgery. These drugs, along with anabolic steroids, may actually cause Gynaecomastia therefore patients are first directed to stop the use of these drugs to see if the breast fullness diminishes before surgery is considered an option.

Initial Consultation

The initial consultation with your surgeon is very important. Your surgeon will need a complete medical history so be ready to provide this information. This will include information about any medical conditions, drug allergies, previous operations and medication you are taking, if any. Your surgeon will examine your breasts and check for causes of Gynaecomastia such as impaired liver function, use of oestrogen containing medications, or anabolic steroids.

Your Operation

The surgical procedure can be performed under twilight sedation or local as a day case. The surgeon can make a small incision along the border of the nipple and removing excess tissue and/or fat. It is usually combined with liposuction. Rarely, is it necessary to remove skin from the breast, therefore scarring should be minimal.

How long does it take?

The operation takes approximately one hour.

Preparation for Surgery

Smokers will be asked to stop smoking 3 weeks prior to surgery. Aspirin and some anti-inflammatory drugs used for the treatment of arthritis can cause increased bleeding, so you should avoid taking these medications for 2 weeks before surgery.

Day of Surgery

Your operation may be performed in a hospital under general anaesthetic or in a day surgery facility under intravenous sedation. Medications are administered for your comfort during the surgical procedure.

After Surgery

When surgery is completed you will be taken into a recovery area where you will be closely monitored. Your chest will be wrapped and you will generally be able to go home within 5 hours of surgery. You will need to wear a compression binder for approximately 4 weeks following surgery.

It is important to understand that recovery time varies among individuals. Some discomfort may be present but will resolve within three to four days and is well controlled with oral medications. Showering is permitted one or two days after surgery.

You will have stitches along the incisions, which will be removed after four to seven days. Bruising and swelling will occur initially but will disappear quickly. Most residual swelling will resolve within a month, however swelling may take from 6 to 9 months to settle completely.

Dependent upon your occupation, you may return to work after 1 to 2 weeks.

What are the Risks?

The subject of risks and potential complications of surgery is best discussed on a personal basis between you and your surgeon. Fortunately, significant complications from Gynaecomastia surgery are infrequent however every surgical procedure involves some general risks. One of the main risks is bleeding arising from a hematoma (collection of blood tissue), infection, scar formation and partial or complete loss of nipple sensation. These complications are temporary and will resolve in time.

You can help minimize certain risks by following the advice and instructions of your plastics surgeon both before and after surgery.

Maintaining a relationship with your Plastic Surgeon

Should there be any questions regarding your surgery be sure they are answered in advance. Well-meaning friends are not a good source of information. Find out everything before proceeding with the operation – a well-informed patient is a happy one!

After surgery, you will return to your plastic surgeon's office for follow-up care at prescribed intervals, at which time your progress can be evaluated.

Please remember that the relationship with your plastic surgeon does not end when you leave the operating room. If you have questions or concerns during your recovery, or need additional information at a later time, you should contact your surgeon.