



## RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstructive (creating a new breast or breasts) surgery after breast cancer is a very personal choice. While not all women will choose to have reconstruction, most women will at least have some questions about it. There are many options available, and may change based upon the treatment you received. Many women suggest that these choices are very overwhelming.

Keep in mind, medical and surgical techniques for the treatment of breast cancer and reconstruction change as we gain more information. The following information may help you if you are considering reconstructive surgery.

Most of the time, breast reconstruction is done by a plastic surgeon. Finding a doctor that you trust, who is willing to work with your individual treatment and choices is very important. The main types of reconstructive surgery are:

- **Implant reconstruction:** This method uses saline or silicone breast implants to create breasts after surgery to remove cancer. This option is less time consuming than the microsurgery options, and may be a good choice for many women. In some cases, tissue expanders are used to stretch the tissues to the right size for the implant. This choice may have a stiffer feel, and there may be some loss of movability in the side you have the implant.
- **Microsurgery reconstruction (also known as DIEP, SIEA, or TUG):** These methods use your own skin and tissue to create a new breast or breasts which feel similar to your own breasts. This method is much more time consuming, and may require multiple surgeries. Some women are better candidates for this type of surgery, so it's important to talk to your doctor about your options.
- **Muscle (TRAM and LAT) flap reconstruction:** Similar to microsurgery, these methods utilize your own skin, muscle, and fat tissue. These methods often have natural feeling results and the results are usually long lasting. These have some drawbacks, including some donor site problems (like a hernia or impaired function from the removal of the muscles).





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### Insurance coverage

- Most insurance policies that cover mastectomy also cover reconstructive surgery (1998; Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act). Please call your insurance to verify your coverage.
- If you have questions about your rights at work and insurance coverage related to breast cancer reconstructive surgery, please call the U.S. Department of Labor on their toll free line (1- 866-487-2365) or Alabama state commissioner's office (1-334-269-3550)
- My Hope Chest (see link below), may also help with some of the cost of reconstruction for some women.
- In some cases, if travel is necessary, the American Cancer Society can help with some of the cost of air travel. You can call 1-800-227-2345 to see if you are eligible for help.

If you choose to undergo reconstruction, it is important to have all of your questions answered beforehand. Talk to your physicians and nurses to determine things that will help you prepare for the day of surgery and your recovery. Be sure to include your family members in discussions about your need for help afterwards. Many times there are some limitations in your activity after your surgery. If you have small children, it would help to have someone who can carry and lift them and help with daily activities.

### Useful websites:

- <http://www.breastcancerreconstructionchoices.com/choices.html>
- <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer/moreinformation/breastreconstructionaftermastectomy/breast-reconstruction-after-mastectomy-toc>
- <http://www.lbbc.org/node/385>
- <http://www.myhopechest.org/>



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