

BREAST AUGMENTATION

Breast augmentation is one of the more common procedures we perform as plastic surgeons and the idea is obviously to enhance the breast volume, but also the breast shape and I will explain how we can do both.

There are a lot of different breast implants out there and nowadays women will often come in and have a lot of information available to them that they have researched, but basically we will go over some of the implant types and why they are used and some of the advantages and disadvantages to the implants and also the incisions necessary to perform the surgery.

So, this is a breast implant, one of the more common ones we use, it is silicone and it is smooth and round. As opposed to this one (silicone), which is textured, it is rough in appearance and this one also happens to be shaped.

Now, the round ones can also be textured as well, but the shaped ones are called shaped because they look like a breast, and there are advantages and disadvantages to this, we will talk about that.

There are saline implants and saline is just basically salt water, and they are more like water balloons with a fixed shell. Silicone feels and looks more natural.

Saline is a little more firm and has a higher likelihood of rippling (rippling refers to seeing wrinkles of the implant through the skin usually on the outer side of the breast - usually in women with very thin tissues). Rippling is possible in the other implants as well, such as silicone, particularly with the textured silicone implants, but less so with saline.

So, why would anyone use saline over silicone if it does not look as natural or feel as natural? Well, one is it is less expensive. Saline is about \$1000 less for us to purchase as plastic surgeons which translates into usually \$1000 less for the patient.

Two, the implants come empty, they are not filled, which allows us to place them with smaller incisions and greater variability of incisions. For instance, with the saline implants we can place them through the belly button (or, as it is called transumbilical breast augmentation). Not my favorite approach, but it is one I have done.

The second is through the armpit. While you can place silicone through the armpit, it is generally very difficult and limited to smaller implants. You can easily place saline implants through small incisions around the areola which may be too small for silicone implants.

Of course, we can place silicone implants through the areola, but these are generally ones that are large enough. (That is, one must have either a large enough areola or a small enough implant to perform a periareolar breast augmentation.)

The other advantage of the saline breast implant is that you can overfill it, which #1 reduces the chances of it rippling, but #2 adds projection and volume to the upper pole of the breast. If you look at the silicone and how it actually sits, it looks very similar to the natural breast shape and so when it sits in the body this way, you can see most of the fullness is right behind the nipple.

Silicone implants are perfect for women that have perfect breasts that want to be larger, but when we have deflation and other things going on in the breasts sometimes saline is the better choice.

Why would anyone not want to use “shaped” breast implants over saline or round implants if the shaped ones looks more like a breast?

Well, for one they are much more expensive. They are at least \$1000 or \$2000 more expensive than the round silicone implants. Two, if a silicone implant rotates it is still round, the shape does not change. If a shaped implant rotates in the body, you have a malposition and a deformity which requires another surgery. So, for many reasons plastic surgeons won't use shaped implants because these can rotate, the chances of them rotating are small, but it is not zero and it adds another element of potential complications to an otherwise really good operation.

Thus, during a consultation, we are not just evaluating the breast volume, we are looking at the shape and whether or not this breast would benefit from an implant alone. Breast augmentation is one of the most rewarding operations in plastic surgery. Women typically love their new breasts. It can restore confidence and even improve sexuality as we have discovered in the study that I conducted with Dr. Guy Stofman in Pittsburg. So overall, it is a procedure that remains popular because it is safe, effective, and a real transforming procedure for women.

TAKE HOME POINT: Breast augmentation is performed with various types of implants and incisions, each of which has their own advantages and disadvantages.