I love hearing from all my good friends and clients who enjoy reading my monthly letter. And I’m always looking to answer pressing questions you might have about anything relating to cosmetic or reconstructive surgery. If you have a question, please feel free to call me at 703-924-3144. Perhaps I’ll feature you in a future issue!

Looking Good
Feeling Good
Virginia Center for Plastic Surgery
Newsletter

Removing Breast Implants: When and Why

Breast implants do not last a lifetime. If your plan is to always have breast implants, know that you will have more than one surgical procedure in your life to fulfill your goal. The simple fact is that the implant itself will eventually become unstable due to its age and will need to be replaced. Beyond the impermanence of the physical properties of implants, there are many other reasons that implants need to be removed. Some of these reasons may be breast pain, inflammation, infection, shifting of implant’s position, asymmetry, sagging, implant wrinkling, hematoma or other health concerns. If there is a diagnosis of breast cancer, the implants must be removed.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, about 75% of implant removal surgeries are performed for three reasons: 1) change in shape or size, 2) implant leakage or rupture, and 3) capsular contracture. Removing breast implants based on size or shape of the implant is normally due to a woman’s dissatisfaction with how she looks as the result of the original implant. Some women may choose to remove the implants entirely whereas other women will have the original implants replaced with a different size or shape. As stated earlier, these replacement implants will eventually need replacing again based on the normal aging qualities of the implant. Implant leakage or rupture creates a medical necessity for removal. If they are silicone implants because the silicone gel can create other problems such as infection. If leakage from silicone gel is suspected, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment designed specifically for breast imaging can be used for evaluation.

On the other hand, even though the solution in saline implants is readily absorbed by the body, the leakage and subsequent collapse of the implant creates a sudden change in the contours of the breast. At this point, the collapsed implant is extruded by the latest methods.

Thought for the Month...
Everything that is worthwhile in life is scary. Choosing a school, choosing a career, getting married, having kids - all those things are scary. If it is not fearful, it is not worthwhile.

Paul Tornier

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www.vcps.com
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needs to be removed. Leakage and ruptures occur with approximately the same frequency for both types of implants and can occur anytime from the first months to many years after the implant surgery.

Ruptures can occur for many reasons, including the age of the implant, damage from instruments during surgery, too much handling during surgery, procedures such as biopsies, compression from a mammogram, physical trauma, and capsular contracture, among others.

Capsular contracture is the result of scar tissue that forms around the implant, which tightens and squeezes the implant. The condition creates a breast that becomes successively firmer, painful and looks abnormal. In such cases, the surgeon can reoperate and replace the implant or you may elect to remove the implants without replacement. It should be remembered that capsular contraction might occur again if the implant is replaced.

The actual amount of time required to remove implants is fairly short. If removal of scar tissue is not involved, the surgery may take only 30 minutes; if it needs to be excised, then surgery may take an hour or more. Scar tissue is normally removed if an implant is going to be replaced or if silicone leakage or infection is present, or if there is concern that the scar tissue will interfere with the accuracy of a mammogram.

As with the original implant surgery, removal is performed under general anesthesia. The incision will be made either under the fold of the breast or around the areola. If the implant is filled with saline, it is possible that the surgeon will deflate the implant, which makes it easier to remove. A silicone gel implant is not deflated prior to removal, but is checked carefully for damage prior to removal.

Recovery is fairly quick, with most patients getting back to normal activities within a few days and full activity in about two to three weeks. As with all surgery, there can be complications such as loss of nipple sensation, swelling, bleeding or infection.

If the implant has been removed without being replaced, there will most likely be dimpling, puckering or sagging of the breasts, loose skin, and possible emotional depression in some (but not all) women. This is a natural reaction to any change in body contour, but may be more so for women who have gone from a larger breast size to one that is much smaller. The distress is similar to that experienced by women who have had a mastectomy. It can occur even if you chose to undergo breast implant removal.

It is important to give yourself time to adjust to your new look. Remember that your reason for breast implant removal is valid, whether for personal or medical concerns.

To obtain more information about this procedure, give our office a call at 703-924-3144 or e-mail us at info@vcps.com.