

Plastic Surgery Information

A breast lift, or mastopexy, is designed primarily to elevate and recontour rather than to increase the size of the breasts — although a breast lift can be performed in conjunction with breast augmentation if greater breast volume is desired. Almost all breast reduction operations also combine an element of breast lifting. Candidates for breast lift surgery are women who have droopy or saggy breasts and would like to have them restored to a more youthful position.

“Unfortunately, until the law of gravity is repealed, all breasts are going to droop over time,” says O. Allen Guinn, III, MD, of Lee’s Summit, Missouri, “and the larger the breast, the faster it will happen. A breast lift removes the excess skin that is responsible for the droopy look, placing the breast in a higher position on the chest, with a more youthful shape. Implants alone may help temporarily by filling out a deflated breast, but the sagging returns rapidly, leaving the patient with a larger drooping chest. Several operations are available to lift the breast, with or without the addition of implants, and the procedure chosen is based on the desires and needs of the individual patient.” “The patients I see most often for breast enhancement surgery are women who have lost a lot of volume and elasticity in their breasts after childbirth,” explains Peter Hyans, MD, of Summit, New Jersey. “This usually requires an implant for volume and various techniques for lifting. My goal is to create natural-looking, not overly large, breasts. I usually use a dual plane technique, where the majority of the implant is beneath the muscle but the lowest part may not be. I find this delivers a more natural-appearing result. A vital aspect of a successful procedure is for the patient to have realistic expectations, and it is up to the surgeon to help her understand the process so she has a good idea of what to expect.” “The joys of childbirth often bring excess skin of the breasts with loss of breast volume,” says Linda Leffel, MD, of Bend, Oregon. “My patients complain of a deflated breast and want to restore the fullness of youth. An implant will increase the breast volume, and a lift will remove the extra skin. I prefer a natural appearance, so I most commonly place incisions around the areola (which will move the nipple higher on the chest wall, and narrow the diameter of the areola). If a woman has significant excess skin, then a vertical incision, similar to a dart that serves to tailor a piece of clothing, will remove additional skin. The implant is first placed under the muscle, followed by redraping of the skin over the implant. Generally the scars are quite minimal; however, if scars become raised or widened, there are options for improving them. A majority of women retain nipple sensation and the ability to breast-feed following a breast lift.” As mentioned earlier, while the use of implants is an option for increasing volume at the time a breast lift is performed, a traditional mastopexy procedure elevates without enlarging the breast. “Combining mastopexy and augmentation can work well, but often a woman simply doesn’t want larger breasts,” says Martin Luftman, MD, of Lexington, Kentucky. “In such cases, reshaping the breast requires working with the breast tissue. Breast shape is all about the breast base diameter. If you have a woman with a large, flat, sagging breast and you try to reduce the excess, you will just end up with a large, flatter breast unless you can reduce the diameter of the breast base and increase breast projection. The technique I use allows me to use the breast tissue to form the base of a cone with the center projecting out into a peak, providing a more youthful and aesthetically pleasing breast shape.” Lawrence Rosenberg, MD, of Lutherville, Maryland, adds, “Plastic surgeons often perform lifts in conjunction with augmentation, but for some patients it isn’t appropriate. Patients for mastopexy are often older than augmentation patients and have different goals for their surgery; they’ve finished their childbearing and seek to regain their earlier shape.” “Of course, breast lift, or mastopexy, can be done without placement of breast implants,” offers James M. Nachbar, MD, Scottsdale, Arizona. “A breast lift elevates the nipples, along with

tightening of the skin in the breasts lower portion to achieve better shape and positioning of the breasts. However, a breast lift alone will not restore the loss of fullness of the breast, especially the upper breast, which occurs following pregnancy. Therefore, when a breast lift is done following pregnancy, it is most often combined with the placement of breast implants, although relatively small implants may be used if desired. I place the implants under the muscle (pectoralis major), which helps to avoid sagging.ö Richard P. Rand, MD, of Bellevue, Washington, offers this perspective on combining breast lift and augmentation, öSome people believe you can't do a lift without an implant. Yet some patients feel that their breasts are large enough. For those women, I perform a complete lifting and reshaping procedure to elevate the nipples and areolas well above the inframammary crease, tighten the skin envelope, restore support to the breast and remove any excess skin. This involves actual sculpting of the breast. If a surgeon is comfortable with this method (I use the central pedicle technique) of sculpting and shaping the breast tissue, excellent results can be achieved for patients who feel they already have enough volume.ö Several factors may contribute to the loss of breast volume and tone, breast sagging, and down-turned nipples. These factors include large breast size, aging, gravity, the effects of pregnancy on the body and, in some cases, significant weight loss. The skin of the breasts is the öenvelopeö that holds them in position. As the skin ages and loses elasticity, breasts can begin to sag. The larger the breast, the more forceful gravity's downward pull, stretching the skin and causing breast laxity, loss of tone, and droopiness. The process may be accelerated by pregnancy. During pregnancy, breasts enlarge, causing the skin to stretch. After pregnancy, breast size diminishes, but the overlying skin may remain stretched.

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