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The Royal Liverpool  
and Broadgreen  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

## Patient information

### Breast Asymmetry

#### Breast Services

Nobody has breasts that are exactly the same size. However, if this is very noticeable, surgery is often helpful. It is usually possible to match the size of the breasts so that when wearing a bra there is little difference.

Differences in the size of the breasts can occur as part of development when the breasts first form. It may also happen later on in life or be due to other treatment such as surgical biopsies or treatment for cancer. There are a number of different operations that can be used to correct the difference in breast size. These are as follows:

- Breast augmentation, which makes one or both breasts bigger. This may be done with an implant that can vary in size, or may be done with a fixed size implant.
- Breast reduction, which is to reduce the size of one breast to match the other. Reduction can be done on one side only, but is often done to both sides at the same time.
- Breast Mastopexy – the breast lift. No breast tissue is removed, and the shape of the breast is altered to give it a lift.
- Myocutaneous flap reconstruction, in which your own tissue is moved from elsewhere in your body to provide new breast tissue.

It is very important to decide which breast you prefer and whether this is the larger or smaller breast. Sometimes it is easier to make one breast smaller and on other occasions easier to make the other breast larger.

Each patient is different. Your surgeon may be limited in what he or she can do, depending on the shape of your breast.

If you have had radiotherapy in the past, a different operation using tissue from another part of your body may be needed.

#### **Breast Augmentation**

This is when a breast implant is put under the breast tissue, often on both sides. Different sizes can be put in on each side and this will give a good match in those women with a breast of relatively normal shape and a small size difference.

For those with a breast that has hardly formed at all, the first stage is often to use a variable size implant that can be increased in size progressively. This takes place over a number of weeks and months to match the size of the other breast and stretches the skin at the same time.

This is done with salty water through a small injection while you are in the clinic. Often, this is the first stage and is done while there is still breast development going on.

More permanent breast shape altering surgery can be considered when breast growth has finished. However, this initial procedure allows a match in size so that a bra and normal clothes can be worn.

### **Breast Reduction**

A breast reduction of one breast can be carried out when there is not too much difference in size and shape, and this can provide a good match. Very often however, a better cosmetic result is achieved by operating on both breasts at the same time giving matching scars and shape.

### **Breast Lift (Mastopexy)**

This procedure is done to alter the shape of the breast, for instance if one breast is particularly droopy while the other is relatively pert. By removing some of the skin of the breast, the shape can be altered so that it is much closer to the shape of the other breast on the other side.

### **Combined Procedure**

Very often two of these procedures are combined. It may be, for example, that an augmentation may be required on one side with a breast lift on the other side.

### **Myocutaneous Flap Reconstruction**

This is often needed if you have had previous surgery or radiotherapy when implants cannot be used. This technique involves using a flap of skin and muscle to recreate the breast shape. This is a major operation requiring a long stay in hospital and a lengthy recovery time.

### **How long does this take?**

The correction of asymmetry and variations in breast size involves complex surgery. Usually more than one operation is required.

To get a match in size is a lot easier than a match in size and shape. For better results, more operations may be needed. A perfect match is usually not possible, but almost always, a marked improvement can be obtained.

Your surgeon will give you specific information on each of the procedures required.

Routinely a photograph is taken prior to your operation and then again after your operation to chart progress and this also acts as a record.

### **What are the potential side effects of this procedure?**

All operations have potential side effects such as pain, bleeding and infection. These side effects are not common and can be treated if they arise.

Occasionally it is not possible to get the breast to match exactly and you may still have a difference in the size of each breast after the procedure.

### **What happens if I don't have the procedure?**

If you decide not to have the procedure your breasts will remain as they are. You can have an appointment with a Breast Reconstruction Nurse to discuss an external prosthesis if required.

## Further information

### The Breast Care Nurses

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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