

Breast Uplift (Mastopexy)

For women whose breasts have begun to droop, breast uplift surgery can restore a more pleasing shape.

About Breast Uplift

In the ideal breast, the nipple and areola are level with the centre of the upper arm. However, pregnancy, breast feeding, weight loss and the simple passage of time can all cause breasts to droop. There may be a loss of volume and elasticity and the nipples will be at a lower level.

Unlike reduction surgery, breast uplift does not aim to change the size of the breasts. Instead it seeks to restore the breasts' more youthful and attractive shape.

As the breasts have lost their former elasticity, the only way to do this is to remove sections of slack and redundant skin, and on the inside of the breast to reshape the tissue. This process may remove some stretch marks but most will remain. Uplift surgery may also be combined with breast augmentation to restore the shape of the breast; however, it is important to maintain a sensible breast size for a pleasing rather than striking figure you are.

Depending on the technique used, breast uplift may not interfere with breast-feeding, making it an option for women who have not finished childbearing. One should bear in mind, however, that an uplift will not prevent the breasts from drooping again from the same causes that caused them to droop originally.

Your consultation

During your consultation, your surgeon will take a medical history and ask for details of any breast surgery you may have had. He will also discuss the scarring that can result from uplift surgery and explain the various options available to you.

Breast uplift typically produces scars around the areolae of the nipples and possibly down to the breast crease and along the crease. The amount of scarring can vary depending on your initial shape. Your surgeon will explain the extent of the scars you should expect.

- If your breasts have not drooped significantly, and an increase in their size would be acceptable to you, breast augmentation alone may be a better way of lifting and firming them.
- In other cases where breast droop is minimal, your surgeon may suggest a technique that causes less scarring, or he may advise against having surgery at all.

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Your operation: what to expect

Technically known as breast ptosis correction, breast uplift surgery usually takes about two hours. It is done under general anaesthesia and usually requires an overnight stay in hospital.

During the procedure, skin is cut away above, below and around the nipple and areola. The breast tissue is reshaped in order to achieve a better contour and enhanced projection. The remaining skin is then stretched taut and rejoined and the nipple is repositioned. Because this type of surgery interferes less with the nerve supply to the nipple areola, sensation is usually preserved

As routine precautions against blood clotting, you will wear anti-embolism (TED) stockings until you are discharged from the hospital and you will be expected to get out of bed and move around as soon as possible after surgery.

After your surgery

Immediately after surgery your new breasts will be apparent. You should see less drooping and your nipples will be in a higher position; however, the final shape of the breast will take around six months to emerge.

During your recovery there are several things you should expect:

- Following surgery your breasts will probably be uncomfortable, possibly painful. This is easily relieved, initially by injection and thereafter by taking mild pain killing tablets such as Paracetamol as required. Aspirin must be avoided because it can promote bleeding.
- You will have dressings and possibly drains on your breast right after surgery. These will be removed on the day after your procedure and your wounds will be re-dressed with light tape dressings, which should be kept dry and in place until your wounds are checked seven days after surgery.
- Showers and shallow baths are possible, however it is important to keep your tapes dry.
- You may begin wearing a comfortable bra immediately after surgery.
- Bruising of the skin of your "new" breasts is to be expected, however it should subside in two to three weeks. To speed the resolution of bruising and swelling you may take Arnica for one week before surgery and two weeks afterwards. Other products like Lasonil® or Auriderm XO have also shown benefits in clearing the bruises once they have occurred.
- You should expect to feel somewhat tired for about two weeks after your surgery. If you tend to be anaemic or have heavy periods, you should consider taking some iron and folic acid supplements. You may drive after three or four days but should not return to vigorous exercise for two weeks. It is also best not to plan to travel for a month after your surgery.
- Immediately after your surgery, the skin around your incisions may appear slightly "pleated" and your scars may be hard, red, raised and lumpy.
- It can take up to 18 months for your scars to flatten and resolve depending on your particular healing characteristics. Putting pressure on any lumpy scars with a well-fitted bra will help them soften more quickly.
- Your scars will, in time, return to normal skin color but you should not expect them ever to become "hairline".
- As with any surgery, there is a possibility of infection after breast uplift. This is readily treated with antibiotics and/or dressings.
- Delayed healing is more likely if you smoke tobacco after surgery.

Mr. Patrick Briggs

Mr. Patrick Briggs is an internationally trained plastic and cosmetic surgeon based in Subiaco, Western Australia.

After graduating from the Royal College of Surgeons in 1977, Mr. Briggs trained in general surgery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, obtaining the fellowship Examination of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in May 1981 and the Fellowship Examination of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in June 1981.

Training in Plastic Surgery followed at Mount Vernon Hospital and University College Hospitals in London, Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA and Cork University Hospital, Ireland.

In 1991, Mr. Briggs passed the Intercollegiate Board Examination in plastic surgery as administered by the four Royal Colleges of Great Britain and Ireland – the FRCS (Plastic Surgery). That same year, he was awarded a Certificate of Completion of Higher Surgical Training (CCST) in plastic and cosmetic surgery.

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