



# Breast reduction surgery

**Breast reduction surgery removes extra breast tissue and skin to reduce pain and improve comfort. This fact sheet explains what to expect before and after surgery.**

## Surgical incisions

Your surgeon will talk with you before surgery about where they will make the incision (cut) in your breast. In most cases, the incision is made around the areola (the darker skin around the nipple), down to the fold under your breast, and then along this fold. The incision has an anchor shape.

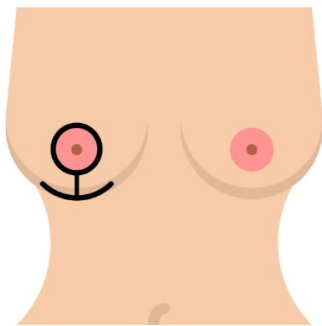


Image: anchor shaped surgical incision

## Drain tubes

Drain tubes help remove excess fluid from a wound.

Most people who have breast reduction surgery don't need a drain tube. In rare cases, your surgeon may place one during surgery if needed.

The tube is usually removed the day after surgery, before you leave the hospital.

## Your breasts after surgery

You may have some mild swelling or bruising after surgery. Most will disappear within 6 weeks. Scarring may change the shape of your areola, and you may notice less feeling in the breast.

## Managing pain

After surgery, you will likely feel some pain or discomfort. Most people need to take mild to moderate pain relief medicine regularly for the first 1 to 2 weeks. Your doctor can help you choose the right medicine for you.

## Supporting your breasts as you heal

Wear a supportive bra day and night for 6 weeks after your surgery. It's helpful to buy an extra bra for this time.

Choose a bra that:

- has no underwire (wireless)
- has a wide band under the cups
- has wide straps and a wide back
- gives underarm support.

A front opening may feel easier to manage because arm movement may be limited after surgery. Wearing a bra day and night for 6 weeks helps support your breasts and reduce swelling, bruising and discomfort.

## Physical activity

Regular gentle exercise is important in the first few weeks after surgery to prevent shoulder stiffness.

### During the first week

Do not lift your elbow above shoulder height.

### During the first 2 weeks

Avoid heavy physical activity.

### Over the next 4 weeks

Slowly increase your physical activity as you become more comfortable.

## After 6 weeks

You should be able to return to your normal level of activity.

Check with your surgeon before you return to vigorous exercise or heavy lifting.

## Looking after your wound

You won't have stitches (sutures) on the surface of your wound. Your surgeon will use dissolvable sutures under your skin and close the wound with either surgical glue or a waterproof dressing.

If your surgeon uses surgical glue, it may look like there is no dressing. This glue is waterproof.

## For the first 48 hours after surgery

Keep the area dry.

## After 48 hours

You can shower normally.

Avoid direct water pressure and hot water on the suture line, as this may increase bruising or swelling.

## About 7 to 10 days after surgery

Staff at our wound clinic will check how you're healing. They will tell you when to start using Micropore tape on your wound. You can buy it at any pharmacy.

Use the tape for 6 weeks, changing it every 7 days. This will help reduce scarring.

Do not rub cream or oil on the suture line during the first 6 weeks after surgery.

## After surgery care

Some swelling or bruising are normal after surgery. This should gradually improve over the first few weeks.

You'll have an appointment at the Royal Melbourne Hospital Complex Wound Clinic in the first week after surgery.

You'll have an appointment with the Breast Plastics Clinic 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

## Infection

Infection is uncommon after surgery. But it's very important to contact the Breast Service staff if you have any signs of infection such as:

- fever
- increasing pain
- redness or swelling around your wound.

## Reducing scarring

We aim to reduce scarring as much as possible. We use different techniques at different stages of healing to do this.

## From weeks 1 to 6

Micropore is a paper tape that gently supports your wound and helps to flatten the scar. The tape is worn all the time. You can shower with the tape on but dry it well afterwards. You change the tape once a week.

Do not use any cream or oil on your scars during this time.

## From week 6 onwards

Massage the scar with a gentle moisturiser like Cetaphil or sorbolene cream to help soften the scar and break up any underlying scar tissue. This will help the scar become flatter and smoother.

Massage in a firm circular motion along the length of the healed scar. Massage your scars 3 to 4 times a day for at least 5 minutes each time.

## From 6 weeks to 12 months

You can use silicone gels and sheets to keep scars moist and make them flatter and softer.

Only use these products once the wounds have fully healed, usually after 6 weeks.

Check with your doctor or nurse before you start.

You can use them for many months but start slowly in case your skin reacts to them.

## If you need medical help

If you have concerns or need medical help, please contact a breast care nurse:

- The Royal Women's Hospital,  
Breast care nurses  
Call 8345 3565 or 0466 813 775  
Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4.30 pm.  
If no one answers, please leave a message.

If you need medical help outside of these hours:

- The Royal Melbourne Hospital  
Call 9342 7000 (ask them to page the plastics registrar)  
You can call any time of day or night.
- In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) or visit your local Emergency Department.

## Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)