

Breast Reconstruction Options

- The type of breast reconstruction procedure available to you depends on your medical situation, your breast shape and size, your general health and lifestyle and your goals. Every woman has a unique situation. Breast reconstruction can be done using a prosthesis (breast implant) or your own tissues (a tissue flap). In most cases, breast reconstruction is done immediately following mastectomy.
- Placement of Tissue Expanders is done immediately following your mastectomy for all patients regardless in the decision to undergo reconstruction with permanent breast implant vs. using your own tissue.

Stage 1 Breast Reconstruction

- During Stage 1, Dr. Meade will reconstruct your breast using a tissue expander. The tissue expander is placed first to create a soft pocket that will eventually contain your permanent implant.
- At the time of tissue expander placement the use of an acellular dermal matrix (alloderm) may also be used depending on your situation. Dr. Meade will discuss this with you during your consultation.
- Drains are also placed during Stage 1 reconstruction to prevent accumulation of fluid in the reconstructed breast. Drains are removed once the 24-hour drainage total is less than 25cc for two consecutive days.
- Approximately 3-4 weeks after surgery, once the drains have been removed and the skin appears to be healed you will begin your expansions. The number of expansions depends on how much volume is added at the time of your initial reconstruction and how large you desire to be.
- At each expansion visit, the port will be located and saline will be injected into the expander with a small needle. **MOST COMMONLY THE AREA IS NUMB AND YOU WILL NOT FEEL THE NEEDLE STICK.**
- If you plan to undergo additional treatment after tissue expander placement, we will continue expansions through chemotherapy but not radiation therapy.
- Most patients stay in the hospital for 1-2 days following the Mastectomy and Tissue Expander Surgery. Recovery time at home is typically 2-3 weeks.

Stage 2 Breast Reconstruction

- During Stage 2, the tissue expander is removed and replaced using the permanent breast implant. Depending on your course of treatment following Mastectomy Stage 2 surgery is often scheduled approximately 6-8 weeks after your final expansion is complete. This date may change if you need additional treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation.
- In some patients, fat grafting may be done to aid in reconstructing the breast. If you are a candidate for fat grafting Dr. Meade will discuss this with you during consultation.
- Stage 2 is typically scheduled as an outpatient surgery. You will be discharged from the facility once you have recovered from anesthesia and met discharge criteria. Recovery time at home is generally 1-2 weeks.

Stage 3 Breast Reconstruction

- Stage 3 is generally the finishing step in your reconstruction and is usually scheduled 2-4 months after the permanent breast implant is placed. If you need nipple reconstruction it is done at this time. Additionally, minor revision for proper implant placement, fat grafting, etc. are done at this time.
- Stage 3 is typically scheduled as an outpatient surgery. You will be discharged from the facility once you have recovered from anesthesia and met discharge criteria. Recovery time at home is generally 1-2 weeks.

What To Expect

- Chances are your new breasts won't look **exactly** like your natural ones used to. However, the contour of your new breasts can usually be restored so that your silhouette will look similar to your silhouette before surgery.
- Discomfort following surgery is normal. You may have a stinging sensation along the incision line and your drains sites may itch. You may also notice some tenderness along your lower rib cage. These sensations gradually decrease after surgery.
- Other common sensations after your surgery may include; numbness under the arm and over the chest, warmth in the arm, a feeling of water trickling down the arm. These sensations are caused by the nerves being cut or moved during mastectomy. They will gradually get better with time, but some degree of numbness may be permanent.

Helpful Resources

- Ask Dr. Meade or his Nurse questions about the procedure for further clarification.
- Breast Cancer support groups often provide additional resources and information that many patients find helpful.
- On the web:
 - <http://www.breastcancer.org/>
 - <http://www.cancer.gov>
 - <http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Choice>