

Breast reconstruction specialist Dr. Constance M. Chen on comfortable apparel choices for women after breast surgery

Bras and Other Post-Mastectomy Clothing

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, February 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For more than 100,000 American women who undergo mastectomies each year, it is important to be as comfortable as possible during the postoperative period. Pain and tenderness, swelling, surgical drains and

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other sequelae from surgery should guide the choice of bras and other post-mastectomy clothing, says plastic surgeon and [breast reconstruction](#) specialist Dr. [Constance M. Chen](#).

“There's no way women can go right back to wearing the same bra, swimsuit or other garment to support breasts in the early weeks after a mastectomy,” explains Dr. Chen, a board-certified plastic surgeon with special expertise in the use of innovative techniques to optimize medical and

cosmetic outcomes for women undergoing breast reconstruction. “Not only does your body need time to heal, but you need softness and comfort.”

Sometimes, the cost of postoperative undergarments is covered by insurance. For example, the AnaOno bras have an online form in which a doctor's prescription can be submitted. “Typically, women wear a bra 24/7 during the early recovery period after mastectomy,” Dr. Chen says, “since it's important to keep the breasts supported but not constricted during healing.” There are many considerations involved in choosing bras aside from pure comfort, including whether one intends to undergo breast reconstruction in the short- or long-term.

Bra basics

Just after surgery, when an incision and surrounding skin are still tender, wear a soft, breathable bra with a wide band under the breasts that isn't tight, Dr. Chen advises. In general, it is better to use front-closure bras. “This makes the bra easier to put on and take off,” she says. “Plus, zippers and velcro are easier than hooks and snaps.”

“Keep in mind that your bra choice will also depend on factors such as whether you're

undergoing breast reconstruction along with a mastectomy. Certain specialty bras, including the Elizabeth bra by Masthead, have several Velcro-adjustable areas and also removable rings for hanging temporary drains from incisions. "

Since breasts will swell after surgery, a good rule of thumb is that any bra that fits perfectly the day you undergo surgery would not be wearable in the days or weeks afterward. "If the bra fits perfectly on the operating room table, you may not be able to close the bra a couple days later because of all the swelling," she explains.

Dr. Chen doesn't recommend underwire or tight-fitting bras for 2 to 3 months after surgery, or until all swelling has eased. Dr. Chen advises to stay away from tight bras—especially those that leave marks or indentations on the breasts. In the long term, however, patients can return to normal bras.

It's all about choices

Mastectomy forces a significant decision: Whether or not to undergo breast reconstruction? The decision will not only affect your body shape, but also your choices in bras and other garments.

For women who do not undergo breast reconstruction, but still want to give the illusion of breasts in clothing, there is a wide selection of pocketed bras on Amazon that hold removable pads, including lacy bras, racerback bras, halterneck bras, plunge bras, seamless bras, and every combination and variation in between. Look for the words "removable pad" or "removable cup" on the product's labeling. "Often, bathing suits, athletic wear and some sundresses also have a pocketed space for these pads," she says. "These options help women appear shapely after surgery even without breast reconstruction." The best removable pads are made of foam, and are very light and washable. They may come in different sizes like A, B, C, and D cups. Some brands also offer different shapes. Unlike the silicone breast prostheses, which are heavy and float, the removable foam pads are also inexpensive, and cost about \$20 for a pair.

Some women who "go flat" after mastectomy do not want the appearance of breasts under their clothing after surgery. For these, women, it is not necessary to wear any bra at all. Alternatively, compressive flat bras are available.

"Ultimately, if you are going to wear bras and other undergarments, you should find something that makes you feel comfortable and confident," says Dr. Chen. "If something doesn't feel right to



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you - or if it causes irritation or discomfort - find something else. Similarly, try to wear clothes that make you feel like your best self while you're healing, because keeping your spirits strong and healthy will help support your recovery."

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