

Breast lift

Why do breasts drop?

Droopiness (known as ptosis) of the breast is commonly seen after pregnancy and breast feeding. Swelling of the breasts during this time causes the skin and fibrous support bands within the breasts to stretch and sag. Following pregnancy and breast feeding the now poorly supported breasts settle into the stretched skin and gravity pulls them down.

Breast ptosis can also be caused by weight loss (particularly gaining and then losing weight) and normal ageing. Some women are genetically more prone to breast ptosis than others.

What does breast lift surgery involve?

There are currently numerous techniques to lift the breasts. They all aim to elevate the nipple, reshape the breast and reduce excess breast skin where necessary. The best technique for each woman depends on the current breast size, shape, degree of ptosis and importantly, the result the woman would like to achieve.

When only a small lift is needed insertion of a breast implant may be all that is required. If a greater degree of lifting is necessary an incision (cut) is made around the nipple and it is elevated to a new position. The underlying breast tissue is reshaped and excess skin discarded. Breast implants can be combined with this approach to restore or increase volume however this is your decision to make.

The scars will differ with each technique. For insertion of breast implants alone a small incision is made in the fold below the breast. In other types of breast lift there is usually a scar around the areola with a vertical scar running from the lower aspect of the areola down to the breast fold.

The scars are designed to be invisible whilst wearing normal clothing and as far as possible are designed to lie under the average bra or bikini top. Over the months following surgery the scars will fade from being red, possibly thick and uncomfortable, to becoming much paler and less obvious. However, they will always be present and visible when clothing is not worn and the scars will vary from one woman to another. In the vast majority of women, the scars are very acceptable and a small trade off for the benefit of improved breast shape.

The procedure is performed in hospital, under general anaesthesia and takes approximately 2hrs. Most women stay in hospital overnight.

Will the improvement last?

All breasts have a tendency to drop with time and you can expect some change in shape to occur after a breast lift. If breast implants are used the extra weight may accelerate these changes. A well fitted, supportive bra can help minimise the rate at which this occurs. Dr Boorer recommends postponing breast lift surgery until after the completion of your family to prevent relapse.

The recovery period

Dr Boorer will see you regularly after your surgery and is happy to be contacted between visits if you have any concerns. All women differ slightly in their recovery. You will be given advice specific to your circumstances. Below is a general guide:

Pain and discomfort:

3-7 days; you will be over the majority of discomfort within 2 weeks

Dressings:

Adhesive tape over the scars for 4 weeks (ok to shower) followed by scar massage +/- silicone gel strips for up to 3 months. Soft, non under wire bras initially followed by bra of choice at 6 weeks.

Time off work:

1-2 weeks for desk jobs, up to 6 weeks for more strenuous work

Driving:

To be able to drive you must be comfortable, off all strong pain killers and moving freely, this can vary from one to four weeks after the procedure.

Sports:

Gentle walking within 1 week, strenuous walking by 4 weeks, by 6 weeks unrestricted.

Follow-up:

1 week, 1 month, 6 months and 12 months

Final result:

6 months, scars continue to improve for 18 months

Is there a risk of unexpected outcomes?

The large majority of patients who have a breast lift performed by an experienced and well trained surgeon do not run into any unexpected outcomes. All surgery, however involves some risks. Dr Boorer always takes the utmost care, and will use the most up to date techniques and preventative measures to minimise these.

During the consultation risks associated with breast lift surgery will be fully explained and you will be given some information to take home to read and discuss with your family should you chose. In the event of an unexpected outcome she will keep a very close eye on you and keep you fully informed.

Following a breast lift most women commonly experience pain, bruising, swelling, temporary numbness of the skin and nipple and minor bleeding. Uncommon outcomes include anaesthetic complications, clots of the leg veins (DVT), infection, poor scarring, permanent numbness, excessive bleeding, major asymmetry, loss of skin or nipple (necrosis), wound breakdown and prolonged healing. Some of these unexpected outcomes may require a second operation.