

Correction of Gynaecomastia

What is gynaecomastia?

All men have a small amount of breast tissue however this is not usually obvious. Gynaecomastia is the medical term used to describe obvious swelling or enlargement of the male breast due to an excess of breast tissue. The breast is made up of two main components, glandular tissue (firm and dense) and fatty tissue (soft). The ratio of glandular to fatty tissue in any breast varies from individual to individual and in gynaecomastia there may be an excess of both. Gynaecomastia may affect one or both breasts.

Why do some men have gynaecomastia?

In the majority of men there is no known cause. Most teenage boys experience a transient degree of breast enlargement but by early adulthood less than 10% have a residual problem. This incidence rises with age, reaching at least 30% (1 in 3) in older men. Occasionally the breast enlargement can be caused by certain medicines, drugs, diseases and some rare congenital abnormalities. These causes will be excluded during the initial consultation.

How is the surgery performed?

The technique used to correct gynaecomastia varies depending upon the degree of enlargement and the ratio of glandular to fatty breast tissue. If there is predominantly a diffuse fatty enlargement of the breast liposuction alone is the usual treatment. This involves sucking out the fatty tissue through a small tube inserted via a 3-4mm cut below the breast. If excess glandular tissue is the primary cause of breast enlargement liposuction alone will not correct the problem as the tissue is too dense to be removed in this manner. An incision (cut) will be made in the skin at the edge of the areola to allow direct excision (removal) of the tissue. This will leave a scar around the lower edge of the areola which usually heals very well. In men with a combination of tissue types both liposuction and direct excision will be used.

If there is a very large amount of breast tissue there may be an excess of skin as well which can lead to a droopy appearance of the breast after the excess breast tissue has been removed. Occasionally excision of this excess skin is required and this will result in longer, more obvious scarring. Dr Boorer prefers to remove the breast tissue first and only remove skin at a second operation if it is absolutely necessary.

The operation is performed under general anaesthesia and takes about 90 minutes. Most men will stay in hospital overnight. Drain tubes are often placed in the breast to remove excess fluid and are removed the morning after surgery. You will be fitted with a firm compression vest that should be worn for 4-6 weeks.

Recovery

Dr Boorer will see you regularly after your surgery and is happy to be contacted between visits if you have any concerns. All men 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.

Dressings:

Shower proof dressing over incisions for 1 week. Compression vest 4-6 weeks.

Time off work:

1 week.

Driving:

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

Sports:

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

Follow-up:

1 week, 1 month, 6 months and 12 months

Final result:

3-4 months, scars continue to improve for 18 months

Is there a risk of unexpected outcomes?

The large majority of patients who have correction of gynaecomastia 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 gynaecomastia 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 gynaecomastia correction most men commonly experience temporary pain, bruising, swelling and numbness. Uncommon outcomes include anaesthetic complications, infection, obvious scarring, asymmetry, excessive bleeding, under or over correction, permanent numbness and excess fluid accumulation. Some of these unexpected outcomes may require a second operation.