



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Breast Reduction

How do I get started?

It is important prior to surgery for patients to spend some time educating themselves about breast reduction surgery. Although breast reduction patients are typically happy, this elective operation is not for everybody. The big risks include delayed healing, bleeding, and scarring. Read the educational materials on our website including consent forms prior to your surgery. Make sure that your surgeon is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, is a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), and American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS). Please check out websites and links at: www.drjlowe.com

Do I need a breast reduction?

Patients who have large breast that cause chronic shoulder and neck pain may be candidates for a breast reduction. The main question for patients considering breast reduction is, are the risks of surgery and the resulting scars worth it or not? Some patients with large breast do not actually feel better following a breast reduction and have a significant resulting scar. In most cases the need for breast reduction is obvious, but in other cases it may not be clear. Most patients who are candidates for breast reduction are typically concerned about shoulder and neck pain and droopy breast. Patients who have extremely large breast at least over two cup sizes are the best candidates for the surgery. Patients with very large breasts are at a high risk for nipple compromise or delayed healing following surgery. Some patients should expect two separate surgical procedures for good results. A frank discussion with your board certified plastic surgeon will help patients make the right decision in most cases.

Are breast reductions usually covered by health insurance?

Breast reduction surgery is by definition a medically indicated surgery. These procedures are covered by insurance only when clinical symptoms and physical exam have been adequately documented. Many patients have large breast but not large enough to be covered by insurance. Your board certified plastic surgeon is your best resource in obtaining coverage for a breast reduction. Dr. Lowe will provide you with the details required to obtain coverage when indicated. Listen to the expert and avoid killing the messenger. Remember that all breast reductions are breast lift, but not all breast lifts are reductions. Patients can expect long incisions around the nipple complex and in the fold. All patient nipple complexes are reduced during surgery to enhance the results. Most patients undergoing breast reduction surgery will need significant tissue removed on one or both sides to obtain symmetry and shape. Insurance requires a certain amount of breast tissue be removed base on patient height and weight. Some patients are required to undergo physical therapy or medical management prior to surgical approval. Patients are encouraged to look at photos of breast reduction patients online or in our office before scheduling surgery. Dr. Lowe will review these important issues during the course of the consultation and consent process.

How is a breast reduction performed?

Breast reductions require aggressively removing excess breast and skin around the breast mound. The skin is tightened over the reduced breast creating a biologic bra. The length and position of incisions is determined by the amount of skin and tissue. Sometimes the surgical scars are small, but most covered breast reductions require longer surgical excision. Breast reduction scars are more prominent than other scars due to the tension required on the skin for long term support. Most plastic surgeons secure the breast to the chest wall to delay breast decent. Dr. Lowe is well trained and experienced in most if not all breast reduction techniques utilizing both suture and non-suture modifications. He individualizes surgery to best meet each patient's needs. He will do his very best to obtain the best breast size and shape while limiting scars and recovery.

I am not sure about my breast size?

One of the biggest concerns for patients considering breast reduction is deciding if they will be happy with the future breast size. Most patients are concerned about the size of their breast after breast reduction surgery because the breasts are placed and secured tightly on the chest. Patient who have asymmetry are often forced to match the smaller breast during breast reduction. Patients who have particularly large breast may want to reduce to a C to D cup. Most breast reduction patients are unable to choose the exact cup size due to anatomic limitations and issues of nipple blood flow. Most patients are only able to reduce their cup size by 2 cups while ensuring a viable nipple complex. Some patients with extremely large breasts will require a free nipple graft which often results in an unsightly scar and loss of nipple sensation. It is best to avoid a free nipple graft whenever possible.

What will be my breast cup size after surgery?

Patients are often unable to choose the cup size they desire due to the amount of native tissue and the position of the nipple complex. Patients with asymmetry may require more breast reduction on one side to match the breast on the other side. Although the surgeon makes recommendations, the patient should make clear their wishes regarding size. One plastic surgeon's C cup may be another patient's B cup. Bra manufactures do not determine cup size because of substantial variations. Most breast reductions involve the removal of a large amount of skin and breast tissue to relieve symptoms. Insurance companies often determine the amount of tissue removal required base on the patient's height and weight. Dr. Lowe asks patients to review the risk and potential complications of breast reduction surgery prior to

consultation. . Go to www.drjlow.com to review pre and post-op photos and other education materials to help clarify patient expectations.

What is the best technique for breast reduction?

Patients should take time to decide if they really want a breast reduction with its potential risks and complications. The best approach can usually be determined in consultation with your board certified Plastic Surgeon. The surgical incision is usually placed around the nipple complex with extension into the breast fold. This depends on the patient's anatomy, personal preference, and the type and size of the breast on both sides. When considering different approaches, all patients should be aware that the larger the breast the bigger the risk and scars. In general, the more skin and breast tissue removed the larger the surgical scar.

What if insurance does not pay for my breast reduction?

Many patients who need a breast reduction are refused coverage by insurance. Breast reduction surgery is not covered by insurance without independent documentation by primary care physicians. Most insurance companies may give permission (pre-determination) for breast reduction surgery without guarantee payment. The cost for self-pay breast reduction surgery is dependent on time and complexity. Breast reduction may be small or big. Only large breast reductions are currently covered by insurance. Large breast reductions require greater surgical skill and are associated higher revision rates. In patients undergoing self-pay breast reductions the cost of pathology or other lab work cannot be fully determined in advance. Patients undergoing breast reduction are better off with insurance coverage in order to cover unattended cost related to revision or complications. Sometimes staged breast surgery is required. Stage one may include breast reduction surgery with breast lift first. Stage two may include wound or scar revision. It is best for all patients undergoing breast reduction to choose the surgeon and procedure that ensures the most predictable outcome.

What about patient safety concerns related to breast reduction?

There are a variety of safety concerns related to breast reductions. Many of these concerns relate to the surgery itself: nipple complex compromise, loss of sensation, delayed healing, skin stretch, and prominent scarring. The risk of anesthesia may be the patient and surgeon's biggest concern. In most cases the safety of breast reduction is most dependent on the surgeon and surgical facility. Breast reduction is an elective operation reserved in most cases for patients in good health in an outpatient setting. Dr. Lowe is a real plastic surgeon, who performs real surgery, in a real surgical center. As a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) he is required to follow safety guidelines designed to ensure the best patient safety and outcomes. Dr. Lowe proudly performs breast surgery only in accredited hospitals and surgical facilities. Most of his self-pay patients undergo surgery at his certified in-office operating suite, Associates Surgery Center of Oklahoma (ASCO). ASCO is fully certified by the American Association for the Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities (AAAASF). For further information about safety and credentials go to: www.AAAASF.org or www.drjlowe.com

Should I wait and think about my options?

Breast reduction surgery is an important lifelong decision. The surgical procedure carries significant risks and benefits. Patients require a period of recovery, scar treatment, possible revision, and long term breast support. Good candidates for breast reduction are patients who do not like the size, shape, and position of their breast and accept the risk of surgery and scarring. Patient should choose a board certified surgeon that they feel comfortable, takes time, reviews risks, puts safety first, and trust. One of the most important issues is patient care and follow-up. Although surgeons cannot pay the cost of revision it is usually best to stick with the surgeon you choose to ensure the best outcome. When possible, patients should talk about their plans with family members and significant others. Patients should have realistic expectations regarding the surgery, recovery, long term care, costs, and results. Breast reduction is often the right thing for the right person.

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. Make sure the breast size and symptoms warrant the recovery and scars.
2. Take your time & ask questions (get a recent MMG and look at photos)
3. Understand risks of surgery and the possibility of revision (delayed healing, scars, etc.)
4. Breast reduction do not always improve shoulder and neck pain
5. Insurance coverage is most dependent on a recent referral (PCP note is best)
6. Dr. Lowe is on your side and is your best advocate for insurance approval
7. Being overweight is the primary reason reductions are not covered
8. Delay reduction when possible weight is stable and finished with child birth
9. Surgeon and facility certification and safety matters
10. Pick and stick with your surgeon when possible