



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Male Breast Reduction (Gynecomastia)

How do I get started?

It is important prior to surgery for patients to spend some time educating themselves about gynecomastia surgery (male breast reduction). Although gynecomastia surgery 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 male breast reduction?

Patients weight is stable and have a substantial and persistent breast mound may be candidates for male breast reduction surgery. The question for male patients considering surgery is, are the risks and the resulting scars worth it or not? Some patients look better with a small bit of breast fullness than with a breast reduction scar. In most cases the need for male 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 the constant need to cover the chest do to the size and shape of the breast. Young male patients with breast smaller than a B cup can often undergo reduction with liposuction alone. Older men with skin redundancy will usually require a surgical reduction with liposuctions. Surgical incisions cannot be avoided in men with a C cup breast or bigger. Patients with significant droopiness (ptosis), particularly patient with larger breast require longer incisions or free nipple grafting. A frank discussion with your board certified plastic surgeon will help patients make the right decision in most cases.

Is gynecomastia surgery covered by health insurance?

Male breast reduction is considered by most as cosmetic surgery procedures. These procedures are not covered by medical insurance plans. Many young patients have large enough breast to be covered by insurance. It is important to remember that males with breast tumors are not the same as gynecomastia. Breast biopsy in men is covered by most insurance, but general enlargement of the male breast is not. Male patients with breast enlargement should undergo a medical workup prior to consulting with a board certified plastic surgeon. Many patients undergoing male breast reductions will need some tissue removed on one or both sides to obtain symmetry and shape. This breast tissue is usually sent for evaluation to pathology. Patients are encouraged to look at photos of gynecomastia patients online or in our office before scheduling surgery. Dr. Lowe will talk to patients about these important issues during the course of the consultation and consent process.

How is a male breast reduction performed?

Male breast reductions require aggressively removing soft tissue and skin around the breast mound. The skin is tightened or re-draped after the breast is reduced or removed. The length and position of incisions is determined by the amount of skin and tissue. Sometimes the surgical scars are small, and other times they are big. Male breast reduction scars are more prominent than other scars due to the tension required on the skin for long term support. Most plastic surgeons use liposuction in combination with breast reduction to fully remove the breast. Dr. Lowe is well trained in most if not all current male breast reduction techniques utilizing both surgical and nonsurgical modifications. He individualizes surgery to best meet each patient's needs. He will do his very best to obtain the best male results while limiting scars and recovery.

I am not sure about what surgery I should choose.

One of the biggest concerns for patients considering male breast reduction is deciding if they can leave with how they look now. Most patients seeking surgery have been self-conscious and even ridiculed for years. Many patients were told that they would outgrow the problem or it would go away if they lost weight. In most cases gynecomastia does not get better it gets worse as patients age. Most patients are smaller after breast reduction using liposuction, but are not satisfied until all the fullness has been removed. Patients who undergo aggressive breast reduction surgery often regret that they did too much. The patient and the surgeon often just cannot win. Patient who have asymmetry are often forced to match the surgery on one side to the other. Most patients who have particularly large breast usually benefit a great deal if they lose weight prior to surgery. Patients who are unable to decide on the best operation should do less, limit the scars, and compromise. It is always best to avoid a long surgical scar on the male breast when possible in patients who want to go shirtless in the future. Some men just want to look good in a dress shirt without wearing 1-2 undershirts.

Will I still have a large male breast after surgery?

Patients undergoing liposuction are unable to choose the cup size they desire due to the amount of native tissue or quality of the breast envelope. Patients with asymmetry may require reduction on one side to match the smaller breast during surgery. Although the surgeon makes recommendations, the patient should make clear their wishes regarding size and shape. One plastic surgeon's B cup may be another patient's C cup. Most male breast reductions involve an aggressive removal of skin and breast tissue. Patients may have visible chest scars, but they will not have any breast tissue. Go to www.drjlowecom to look at photographs of patients who have undergone different types of gynecomastia surgery. Pictures always help to clarify patient expectations.

What is the best technique for gynecomastia surgery?

Patients should take time to decide if they really want gynecomastia surgery 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 and across the midline of the chest. Female reduction incisions placed around the nipple and in the fold only accentuate the breast. Male breast reduction surgery is completely different. The exact surgery depends on the patient's anatomy, personal preference, and the type and size of the breast. When considering different approaches, all patients should be aware that it is best to remove as much skin and tissue as possible to ensure longevity. In general, the more skin removed the larger the surgical scar.

Does male breast reduction cost more than liposuction alone?

The cost for male breast reduction is dependent on time and complexity. Chest liposuction alone does not take as much time to perform and does not require lengthy surgical incisions. Male breast reduction or removal requires greater surgeon skill and is associated with higher revision rates. In patients undergoing male breast reduction or removal all breast tissue must be sent to pathology. Patients undergoing breast removal or mastectomy should expect extra fees related to time and complexity. Sometimes staged surgery is required. Stage one may include breast liposuction with skin re-drape. Stage two may include skin and soft tissue resection with or without scar revision. It is best for patients choose the operation that is right for them and ensures the most predictable outcome.

What about patient safety concerns related to gynecomastia surgery?

There are a variety of safety concerns with gynecomastia surgery. Many of these concerns relate to the surgery itself: nipple or skin compromise, skin stretch, persistent breast mound, and prominent scarring. The risk of anesthesia may be the biggest concern. In most cases the safety of male breast surgery is most dependent on the surgeon and surgical facility. Gynecomastia surgery 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 surgery in accredited hospitals and surgical facilities. Most of his cosmetic 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?

Gynecomastia 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 chest compression. Good candidates for surgery are male patients who hate having female 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 full cost of revision it is usually best to stick with the surgeon you choose to ensure the best outcome at the best price. 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. Gynecomastia surgery can be the right thing for the right person.

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. Do less and lower expectations (the enemy of good is better)
2. Make sure the breast deformity warrants the chest scars
3. Take your time & ask questions (look at photos)
4. Try liposuction first if possible, you can always do more later
5. Staged surgery is not complicated and reasonably priced
6. Liposuction alone cannot fix a C cup breast
7. Remove the breast completely when indicated (listen to your surgeon)
8. Surgical scars prevent most patients from going shirtless
9. Surgeon and facility certification and safety matters
10. Pick and stick with your surgeon when possible