

Risks of Breast Implants

Breast implants have many benefits, but also have risks. This factsheet explains some of the risks you may have with breast implants.

Changes in sensitivity and numbness

You may notice a loss of sensation or numbness in the skin of your chest after a mastectomy. Breast implant surgery may cause more changes in sensation. The changes may be temporary or permanent.

Wrinkling

Some people notice wrinkling of the implant under the skin. Sometimes, you can feel the edge of the implant. These problems are usually mild and do not need treatment. Rarely, wrinkling can cause problems and need more surgery.

Capsular contracture

Capsular contracture happens when your body builds excess scar tissue, called a capsule, around the implant. The capsule can change shape and cause pain or the breast to look different. Most of the time, the capsule does not cause health problems or pain. If pain or shape changes happen, surgery may be needed.

Asymmetry and position

Reconstructed breasts often sit higher on the chest and are not as soft as the original breasts. We expect most implants to move downward on the chest wall as you heal from surgery.

One breast may have a different size and shape than the other. If your reconstruction is only on one side, talk with your surgeon about options for the other breast to help with symmetry.

Although the two breasts will never look exactly the same as they did before surgery, our goal is to help you feel comfortable with how you look in a bra and other clothing. At times, more surgery can help with position, contour, or symmetry problems.

Infection

Although we take care to prevent infection during and after surgery, infections can happen. Infections may require medical treatment, taking out the implant, delaying the surgery, or choosing another reconstruction option.

Changes over time

Implants will likely last several years, but are not meant to be permanent. Implants can rupture or leak, which can lead to shape changes or pain.

You should see your surgeon for follow-up every year or anytime that you have a question, concern or change in your implants. If your implant has ruptured or is leaking, you will need a new one.

Future cancer risk

Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (ALCL) is a rare cancer of the immune system. Researchers have found that ALCL sometimes occurs in the tissue around some types of implants. We call this Breast Implant-Associated ALCL or BIA-ALCL.

BIA-ALCL happens with many types of implants, but is much more common with textured implants. At this time, we only use smooth implants and expanders at Huntsman Cancer Institute.

Protecting yourself

Visit your surgeon regularly and seek help for any pain, lumps, swelling, or asymmetry.

Do monthly breast self-exams to check your breast implants and ask your doctor about other ways to find problems early.