

Recovery and acceptance: Your body: Breast prosthetics and the prosthetic bra

Breast prosthetics and the prosthetic bra

It is a fact that almost all breast cancer patients will have to have part of a breast, or a whole breast removed, in order to maximise their chances of survival. Sometimes, the surgeon will suggest that the breast be reconstructed immediately, by a plastic surgeon.

You can also (at first) buy a prosthetic in a specialised lingerie shop. This is actually a 'gel pudding'; lovely and soft.

You put the prosthetic in a special sleeve in your bra. Some prosthetics can be placed directly on your skin. They take on the temperature of your body.

The prosthetics shop can provide you with instructions and tips on how to wear it. The bra has to fit well and preferably have wide straps, so that there is no pinching or chafing. This is particularly important for women whose lymph nodes have been removed.

If the straps are narrow and tight, this may cause lymphedema to form on the body. This may mean that you will need to buy a more expensive type of bra.

The prosthetic is covered by your health insurance, once every few years. Check your health insurance policy. You may find it doesn't need replacing yet. In that case, you wait until it does. The bras you must pay for yourself.

Women without official documents or insurance are sometimes eligible to receive a contribution towards the costs from special funds. Besides these, there are volunteer organisations that collect and distribute second hand prosthetics and bras. These are especially for women who are unable to pay for a prosthetic and a good bra.

If you have large, heavy breasts, your prosthetic may not match your own breast and so disrupt your natural balance. You could start leaning to one side, causing shoulder complaints. In this case, a breast reconstruction in combination with a breast reduction of the healthy breast may be a better option for you.