

WHAT'S NEW

Breast Reconstruction and Lymphoedema

For women who undergo mastectomy, breast reconstruction represents a vital aspect of care and recovery after breast cancer. Breast reconstruction has been clearly shown to improve the psychological and emotional aspects of healing. Breast reconstruction is now increasingly performed for women who undergo mastectomy. This is due to heightened patient awareness as well as increased surgical expertise and the options of reconstruction available. There has also been recognition by surgeons and oncologists of the psychological benefits of reconstruction.

For the patient, fear of cancer recurrence and a perceived loss of femininity often co-exist with the desire for breast restoration. Hence, breast reconstruction not only deals with the surgical challenge of molding a natural and attractive breast, but also with many psychological issues and body image concerns. The aim of our reconstruction is to allow women to return to their fulfilling lives which they enjoyed before surgery. Our breast reconstruction service is dedicated to the care of the breast cancer patient who wishes to undergo reconstruction of a new breast after mastectomy, as well as for other patients who may require partial breast reconstruction or aesthetic improvements after breast surgery.

There are many options of breast reconstruction. Besides understanding the desire of the patient, the benefits and disadvantages of each possible option should be discussed with the patient before choosing the best option that suits the patient. We have the most comprehensive breast reconstruction programmes in Singapore.

We offer both immediate and delayed breast reconstruction:

Total breast reconstruction using autologous tissue

- DIEP flap (Deep Inferior Epigastric Perforator)
- TRAM flap (Transverse Rectus Abdominis Myocutaneous)
- LD flap (Latissimus Dorsi)

Total breast reconstruction using breast implants

Partial breast reconstruction using autologous tissue

- TAP flap (Thoracodorsal Artery Perforator)

Aesthetic improvement of the other non-affected breast

- Breast lift (Mastopexy)
- Breast reduction
- Breast augmentation
- Nipple reconstruction

The DIEP flap was recently introduced for breast reconstruction and it offers the least donor site morbidity for the patient. We have the most experience with this new option of breast reconstruction in Singapore.

Besides reconstruction, we also manage patients with lymphoedema. Upper limb lymphoedema is commonly encountered in patients who had axillary clearance for breast cancer. Even till now, this condition is not well recognised and patients often suffer in silence. Our division has the expertise of supermicrosurgery and can offer the procedure of lymphaticovenular anastomoses (LVA) to alleviate this problem. This is a minor procedure that can be performed as a day surgery procedure under local anaesthesia.

The Division of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery in NUH has provided the service of breast reconstruction for more than 10 years. We have a team of doctors, both female and male, and breast care nurses. We work closely with the breast surgeons and oncologists to provide gentle and personalised care to our patients. Having to deal with the diagnosis of breast cancer can be a daunting experience. Our doctors, breast care nurses and breast cancer support group strive to meet any other areas of need of our patients. A specialised combined clinic has been set up for this purpose. In the same visit, the breast cancer patient will be able to discuss important issues with the breast surgeon and our reconstruction surgeon. We have prepared a special brochure to help in our patients' understanding of breast reconstruction. This is available in English, Mandarin, and Malay.

For more information, please contact:

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