

Fat Grafting for Breast Augmentation What Women Should Know:

The idea of taking your own fat and repositioning it to augment your breasts has captured the attention of both consumers and the media. Research on the safety and efficacy of this procedure is continuing to further evaluate benefits and risks.

ASAPS believes you should consider the following before consultation with a board-certified plastic surgeon about fat grafts for breast enhancement:

What is fat grafting?

Fat grafting, also known as fat transfer or lipoinjection, is a process in which fat cells are removed from one part of the body and injected into another. It has a long history of use in the facial region to a more youthful appearance which may be permanent.

How long has fat grafting been used for [breast augmentation](#)?

Augmenting the breast with the body's own fat first became popular in the 1980s. ASAPS initially cautioned its members using the technique because of potential side effects such as oil cysts, calcification, and scarring within the breast tissue which may make mammograms difficult to interpret.

Radiologic literature indicates that new generations of mammography equipment are more sophisticated than their predecessors and better able to distinguish cancer cells from benign ones. This is particularly true of digital mammography, especially when examining dense breast tissue. In addition, recently published studies suggest that radiologists are able to distinguish between the changes seen after surgical procedures to the breast and changes that are suspicious for cancer. It is important to note, however, that any surgical procedure to the breast will result in changes on mammography, and some findings may lead to further investigation to determine if they are related to breast cancer.

The methods for harvest and injection have also been refined over time. There are many successful techniques for removing the fat and reinjecting it being used by board certified plastic surgeons. While techniques may vary among surgeons, one common theme is that in most cases not all of the fat that is injected will remain over time. There is debate over exactly how much of the transferred fat remains long term.

What are the risks?

Fat cells removed from one body site and injected into another do not always survive. Fat injected into the breast may be absorbed by the body, may become liquid and form a cyst, calcify, or produce scarring. As with any surgical procedure, it is possible for fat grafting to produce changes in the breast that may be deemed suspicious on examination by a physician or on mammography, and may lead to further testing to determine if the findings are related to breast cancer.

What are some of the other issues involved with fat grafting for augmentation?

The process may require multiple sessions to increase breast size and there may be a limit to the breast size obtained. You will need to have an adequate supply of excess fat for the procedure, and it can take up to six months or more for your result to take final shape after the procedure.

Are there other current applications for this procedure in breast surgery?

Yes. Fat grafting is being used for enhancing the appearance after different types of breast reconstruction. The procedure can also soften the appearance of existing implants, particularly in very thin women and hide visible rippling. More recently, fat grafting has been used at the same time as placement of implants for cosmetic breast augmentation to enhance breast shape.

What does ASAPS recommend?

The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery recognizes the growing interest in fat grafting for breast enhancement, and we are continuing to monitor clinical evidence which documents the safety and efficacy of this procedure. Fat grafting to the breast is showing promising results and may become a popular breast augmentation procedure. We recommend that patients meet with their board certified plastic surgeon and discuss the most recent research and options.