

## Amy's Story

### Age 41, Immediate Direct-to-Implant Reconstruction with AlloDerm® Regenerative Tissue Matrix

"I was diagnosed about a year and a half ago, and it was fairly devastating actually when I got the phone call. I had had a suspicious mammogram come back about three weeks earlier, and I had gone for the biopsy, always kind of thinking, 'No, it's not going to be me. I'm only 39. I couldn't have breast cancer.' But when I got the call, my doctor said, 'There's cancer there.'

After the diagnosis, of course my family was tremendously supportive. My mom had – is a two-time cancer survivor, so she knew what it felt like. I'm sorry, I'm going to get emotional.

I learned about breast reconstruction actually about a month and a half before I was diagnosed because my sister had come from the West Coast – from Hawaii actually to have a prophylactic mastectomy done herself because we have a significant family history. I had – my mother had had breast cancer. My grandmother, my maternal aunt in her early 40's had been diagnosed. So my sister, who is a women's health professional, she – she had done a lot of research and she had been to various doctors who told her she had a significant risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime. It was amazing timing. I mean, it was – it was – I don't even know what the word is.

If she hadn't come and done that, would I have ever gone? When would I have gone for that mammogram? I had been putting it off for years. I had made appointments. I cancelled appointments. So fortuitous is the word, I suppose.

I had met her surgeons. I knew exactly what kind of procedure she had done. She had gotten fantastic results. So in a way it was easier for me to just sort of follow suit what she had done. The idea of being able to go directly to implant after the mastectomy, it was all done within the same three-hour surgery.

I was 39 years old. I wasn't – I had – I still take a lot of pride in my appearance. I assume most women do. I wanted to feel like I always felt. You know, I didn't want to feel like something was missing. That was pretty much it. You know, I just wanted to feel like I always felt. I wanted normalcy, and if this was how I was going to get it in such a crazy situation, that's what I was going to do.

I have three older sisters, and they were all fantastic. My mother, who was 74 at the time, drove six hours like repeatedly to come take care of me and my kids and my husband too for my chemo treatments. She stayed with my kids when I was in the hospital having the mastectomy. She – my other – I have another older sister, Mary Beth. In the times when my mother wasn't coming down, she would come, and my kids adore her, so it was perfect for them because they needed a little break too.

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Important Information: Every patient is different and their reconstruction options and their results may vary. All depictions on the site are for illustration purposes only. Whether or not you have breast reconstruction is a decision you need to make in consultation with your physician. Only you and your physician can determine the best option for you. Please ask your doctor to explain the benefits and risk of various reconstruction options and whether they are right for you.

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## Amy's Story (continued)

The impact that breast reconstruction has had on my life, it made me feel good about myself. I think I would have been self conscious without it. It made me take even more pride in my appearance honestly than I did before because I went a little bigger.

It was never something that I wanted. You know? And I didn't go through life thinking, 'Oh, I want to be bigger.' But then when it was presented as an option, well, why not? Right? So I did go up a little bit. Not a lot. And so it kind of gave me this new sense of confidence actually.

If I were to speak to a woman who was going through what I was going through, I would tell her to strongly consider direct implant reconstruction because you wake up and you're finished, and that's huge when you're going through something like this.

As much as you don't think – you might not think that the reconstruction is going to be all that important, it really is because how you come out feeling on the other – on the other side of your mastectomy, a lot is going to kind of revolve around your body image, what you look like, how you feel about your body. You might have a longer road ahead in terms of chemotherapy or whatnot. I know in my case I was going to go bald. And to have no breasts and go bald, that's a lot to take. You know? So I was so happy that I had this. I had done this, and it turned out great. And you know, hair grows back."

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