

Radiation after Mastectomy

For some women, radiation therapy may be required after their mastectomy. If this is true for you, you will need to discuss with your surgeon how this affects the timing of your breast reconstruction.

Radiation and Breast Implants

Radiation following reconstruction can affect breast implants, causing complications such as:

- Breakdown of the wound at the incision site
- Extrusion: in which the skin thins to the extent that the implant breaks through the skin
- Capsular contracture: in all cases, scar tissue will form beneath the skin encompassing the implant. Radiation increases the risk that this scar tissue will cause your breast to contract, which could cause it to appear round or hard.

Despite its benefits for the treatment of breast cancer, radiation therapy can be the source of potential problems when it comes to breast reconstruction. If you are scheduled for radiation, your doctor(s) may suggest that the reconstruction be completed after your radiation treatment.

Radiation and Tissue Expander Reconstruction

Radiation can be used either before or after the tissue expansion procedure. In some patients, fluid can be removed from the expander in order to carry out radiation therapy. Following your recovery period, the expander can be re-inflated.

Tissue expander reconstruction may help keep the skin on the breast from contracting or shrinking due to the radiation treatment. After radiation, the filled expander can be removed and replaced with a permanent implant.

Radiation and Autologous Reconstruction

Radiation treatments can potentially create problems with the tissue used to form the new breast in autologous reconstruction. Radiation can cause shrinkage or hardening of the tissue. As such, if your doctors see the need for radiation post-mastectomy, they may suggest you have a delayed breast reconstruction.

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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