

Male Breast Reduction (Gynecomastia)

Gynecomastia is a medical term that comes from the Greek words for "women-like breasts." It is actually quite common. Gynecomastia affects an estimated 40 to 60 percent of all men. It may affect only one breast or both. Certain drugs and medical problems have been linked with male breast overdevelopment, there is no known cause in the vast majority of cases.

For men who feel self-conscious about their appearance, male breast reduction surgery can help. The procedure removes fat and or glandular tissue from the breasts, and in extreme cases removes excess skin, resulting in a chest that is flatter, firmer, and better contoured. Various forms of Liposuction are often added to the procedure to assist in the overall result.

The best candidates for surgery have firm, elastic skin that will reshape to the body's new contours. Surgery may be discouraged for obese men, or for overweight men who have not first attempted to correct the problem with exercise or weight loss. Also, individuals who drink alcohol beverages in excess and/ or smoke marijuana are usually not considered good candidates for surgery. These drugs, along with anabolic steroids, may actually cause gynecomastia. Therefore, patients are first directed to stop the use of these drugs to see if the breast fullness will diminish before surgery is considered an option.

If excess glandular tissue is the primary cause of the breast enlargement, it will be excised, or cut out. The excision may be performed alone or in conjunction with liposuction.

If your gynecomastia consists primarily of excessive fatty tissue, your surgeon will likely use liposuction to remove the excess fat. In a typical procedure, an incision is made in an inconspicuous location--either on the edge of the areola or in the under arm area. Working through the incision, the surgeon cuts away the excess glandular tissue, fat and skin from around the areola and from the sides and bottom of the breast. Major reductions that involve the removal of a significant amount of tissue and skin may require larger incisions that result in more conspicuous scars. In extreme cases where large amounts of fat or glandular tissue have been removed, skin may not adjust well to the new smaller breast contour. In these cases, excess skin may have to be removed to allow the removing skin to firmly re-adjust to the new breast contour. The nipple may have to be replaced back on the chest as a skin graft.

A small drain is usually inserted through a separate incision to draw off excess fluids. To help reduce swelling, you'll probably be instructed to wear an elastic pressure garment. It may be three months or more before the final results of your surgery are apparent. Gynecomastia surgery can enhance your appearance and self-confidence, but it won't necessarily change your looks to match your ideal. Before you decide to have surgery, think carefully about your expectations and discuss them frankly with your plastic surgeon.