

## **Patient Information Letter: Breast Reduction Surgery**

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Thank you for considering breast reduction surgery. This letter provides important information about the procedure, what to expect, and how to prepare. Please read it carefully, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

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### **What is Breast Reduction Surgery?**

Breast reduction surgery (also known as reduction mammoplasty) is a procedure that removes excess breast tissue, fat, and skin to reduce the size and weight of the breasts. The goal is to improve physical comfort, address medical issues like back or neck pain, and enhance overall body proportion.

It can also provide relief from the following:

- Chronic pain in the neck, shoulders, and back
  - Skin irritation under the breasts
  - Difficulty exercising or performing physical activities
  - Difficulty finding clothes and bras that fit comfortably
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### **Preparing for Surgery**

#### **1. Preoperative Appointment:**

You will have a consultation with your surgeon to discuss your medical history, surgery goals, and any potential risks. Bring a list of current medications and supplements you are taking.

#### **2. Medical Clearance:**

Some patients may need to undergo lab work or imaging (like a mammogram) to ensure they are in good health for surgery. Your surgeon may also ask you to stop certain medications (like aspirin or blood thinners) that could increase bleeding risk.

#### **3. Lifestyle Adjustments:**

- Avoid smoking or vaping at least 4–6 weeks before surgery to promote healing.
  - Maintain a healthy diet to support recovery.
  - Plan ahead for your recovery period by arranging for help at home, especially for the first few days post-surgery.
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## The Procedure

The surgery is performed under general anaesthesia and typically lasts 2 to 3 hours. The incision pattern is known as a "Wise pattern" and the resulting scar lines will be in the shape of an anchor or "inverted T", with the nipple being re-sized and repositioned in a lifted position. Excess tissue, fat, and skin are removed. The nipple is kept on its original blood supply and lifted up to a more aesthetically pleasing position.

You will have internal absorbable stitches (sutures). There will be some long ends of sutures under the dressing which is trimmed when the dressings come off approximately one week after the surgery. Mr Li does not routinely use drains for breast reduction procedures. He does use special dressing called 'PICO dressings', which are external vacuum dressings. These help blood flow to the wound and speeds up wound healing and reduces wound complications. PICO dressings are programmed to turn off after 1 or 2 weeks and you will see the nurse at the one week mark to remove them.

It is difficult to guarantee an exact cup size, but depending on individual preference Mr Li can tailor the end result to approximate your preferred "ideal" size. Most patients prefer to be between a C and D cup, but each individual body and breast shape is unique and your expectations can be discussed in more detail at your pre-operative consultation.

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## What to Expect After Surgery

### 1. Hospital Stay:

In most cases, patients will have an overnight stay, but this may vary depending on individual circumstances. It is possible to do this as a day procedure if you are fit and well but you must have another responsible adult at home with you who can look after your post operatively.

### 2. Pain and Discomfort:

It is normal to experience some swelling, bruising, and mild pain, which can be managed with prescribed medication. Please take regular paracetamol 1000 mg four times a day for at least the first week. This acts as baseline pain relief and works better to prevent significant pain. You can take additional pain relief on top of baseline paracetamol and your anaesthetist or surgeon will tailor this to your individual level of pain relief.

### 3. Post operative bras:

Mr Li recommends a bra without an underwire that opens at the front so that it's easy to take off/put on. You don't need expensive specialty surgical bras, the bras sold at Kmart for \$20 a pair work very well. It is a good idea to two pairs in slightly different sizes because it's difficult to anticipate exactly what size will fit the most comfortably, and as swelling subsides you may find that the fit also changes. Please don't wear a bra that is too tight or uncomfortable as this may impair blood flow to the wound/nipple and impair healing. You should aim to wear this type of bra for approximately two weeks. After that you can go back to a normal bra, as long as it is comfortable.

### 4. Recovery Timeline:

- **First Week:** You will need to rest and avoid strenuous activities.
- **2–4 Weeks:** Light activities may resume, but avoid heavy lifting or upper-body exercises.
- **6 Weeks:** Most patients can return to their regular routine and exercise regimen. Your surgeon will guide you based on your progress.
- **Please note you should not drive for at least the first two weeks.** After two weeks, if you

are healing well, you may be able to resume driving but please wait until you see Mr Li for clearance to resume driving.

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### **Potential Risks and Complications**

As with any surgery, breast reduction carries risks. These may include:

- Infection (1-2%)
- Poor wound healing (this may require additional dressings for a couple of weeks)
- Haematoma and seroma (blood or fluid accumulation) - all patients will have a degree of seroma fluid accumulation, which is a normal part of the healing process. This fluid will reabsorb with time. If it becomes tense or uncomfortable the excess fluid can be drained with a needle in the clinic.
- Altered sensation to nipple or breast. Mr Li uses a fascial based reduction technique to minimise sensation loss, but there will likely be a degree of reduced sensation at least temporarily.
- Scarring (which will fade over time), including keloid or hypertrophic scarring
- Asymmetry (minor differences in breast size or shape)
- Breast feeding will not be possible after breast reduction surgery

Rare but serious complications:

- Nipple necrosis or nipple loss - this only occurs in approximately 1-2% of cases, where the blood supply of the nipple is lost. The risk of nipple necrosis is higher if you have had previous breast surgery, especially previous breast reduction surgery. This may result in a second surgery to remove the unhealthy skin and tissue of the nipple. A fake nipple can be reconstructed down the track but it won't look the same as your normal nipple (nipple reconstruction with cosmetic tattooing provides the best overall cosmetic result in this situation).
- General complications of surgery including clots forming in the legs or lungs, which can happen with any surgery. You will be given compression stockings and pneumatic calf compressors to help blood flow in the legs whilst in surgery. You should continue to wear the compression stockings until you are able to walk around independently (usually 1-2 days after surgery).
- Anaesthetic complications including allergic reactions, heart or lung problems. Your anaesthetist will discuss this with you in more detail prior to surgery. Overall, general anaesthetics are very safe for people without pre-existing medical problems and serious complications are extraordinarily rare.

Your surgeon will take every precaution to minimize these risks, but it is important to understand them. If you experience significant pain, redness, swelling, or discharge after surgery, contact us immediately.

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### **Long-Term Results**

Breast reduction surgery provides long-lasting results, but factors such as weight changes, pregnancy, and ageing can affect the shape and size of your breasts over time. Most patients report significant relief from physical discomfort and improved self-confidence following the procedure. It is possible to perform breast reduction surgery a second time, although the risks associated with a "redo" operation are higher.

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**When to Contact Us**

Please call our office if you have any questions or notice any of the following:

- Severe pain or swelling
  - Fever or chills
  - Fluid leakage from the incision sites
  - Difficulty breathing or chest pain (seek emergency care immediately)
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Thank you again for trusting us with your care. We are committed to providing you with the highest standard of treatment and support throughout your surgical journey.

Wishing you a smooth and speedy recovery!

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This letter is intended to provide general information. Your surgeon will provide you with personalized advice and instructions before and after surgery.