

Mastectomy

Tips for a Natural-Looking New Breast

Years ago, women had little choice but to stuff their bras with cloth or paper to simulate a breast removed due to cancer. Today, they can choose either breast reconstructive surgery or a prosthesis, an artificial breast that resembles a natural breast.

"A prosthesis is a nice choice for many women who can't bear the thought of or aren't physically able to have additional surgery," says Dixie Mills, M.D., a general surgeon specializing in breast surgery at Maine Medical Center in Portland. "The correctly fitted prosthesis can help you feel as comfortable and confident as you did before surgery."

Finding the right prosthesis has benefits beyond good looks (although that's important). When a breast is removed, one side of your chest weighs more than the other, which can cause poor posture and strain the muscles in your shoulders, neck, and back. "Because prostheses come in different weight measures, this won't be a problem," says Dr. Mills. "And you can wear one while you exercise and swim, which is important for your overall health and a full emotional recovery."

Ask your surgeon to refer you to a professional prosthesis fitter, and follow these tips.

Consider the type of breast surgery you've had.

Specific shapes and sizes are required for women who've had, say, a radical versus a modified mastectomy, or a lumpectomy. Your fitter should match the texture and shape of the prosthesis to your

healthy breast so that it looks natural, says Josephine Murphy, a prosthesis consultant at Evelyn H. Lauder Breast Center Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City.

Buy a surgical bra with a built-in pocket to hold the prosthesis. Your fitter (often an employee of a shop that sells lingerie or undergarments

for women who've had mastectomies) can find the right one for you—they're specially trained. Or, ask your fitter to sew pockets into the bras you already own, including exercise bras. If you want to wear a strapless dress, a prosthesis that adheres directly to your body is another option. Many insurance companies, including Medicare and Medicaid, will cover the cost of surgical bras and prostheses.

If you swim, ask for a prosthesis that's made for the water. Your fitter can sew a pocket into a swimsuit's bra. Or, she can provide you one with pockets to accommodate the prosthesis.

Helpful Hint

Ask yourself: Does the prosthesis match the size, shape, skin tone, and texture of your healthy breast? Do you like the bras you've chosen? Does the prosthesis fit well inside your bras? When you wear the prosthesis directly on your chest, does it feel comfortable? Does it look natural in your clothes? "If you answer yes to all of these questions, then you've chosen the right prosthesis," says Murphy. ■

magnesium. Do not use if you have celiac disease (gluten intolerance), as it contains gluten, a grain protein.

Helpful Hint

The beneficial minerals in the herbs mentioned here aren't available in tinctures or

capsules. To get the health benefits of these mineral-rich herbs, advises Weed, you need to make an infusion—a lot of dried herb brewed for a long time. Place 1 ounce of the dried herb in a quart jar. Fill it with boiling water. Seal it tightly and allow it to sit for 4

to 8 hours. Drink at least 1 cup of the strained liquid and up to a quart a day. The infusion will last up to 2 days in the refrigerator. For best results, take one herb for a day or two, then switch to another one. Mint can be added to give the herbs a lift. ■

Menstrual Cramps A Nutritional Prescription for Periodic Pain

As a young woman, Jeanne Wallace, Ph.D., suffered from severe menstrual cramps that made her miserable. "I would throw up. I'd miss 2 days of school," she recalls. "I'd lie on the bathroom floor wishing I was dead." Even massive quantities of ibuprofen—24 capsules in a 24-hour period, she admits—failed to bring her relief.

Today, the certified nutrition consultant is cramp-free, thanks to a nutritional regimen that she devised and tested based on scientific research. "I finally gave up on the drugs," Dr. Wallace says.

Menstrual cramps—and the gastrointestinal discomfort that may accompany them—stem from chemicals known as prostaglandins, which are released in abundance during menstruation and cause your uterus to contract. Over-the-counter menstrual painkillers

such as ibuprofen (in Midol IB, for example) block the formation of these inflammatory prostaglandins, preventing the contractions. But these drugs don't always work. Your body can also make isoprostanes, which cause cramps, too, but don't respond to ibuprofen or

DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE

Herbalists often recommend evening primrose oil for PMS, but it shouldn't be used to relieve menstrual cramps, since it contains omega-6 fatty acids that can stimulate inflammatory prostaglandins, Dr. Wallace says.

similar drugs (such as Pamprin, which contains acetaminophen.)

Give your body the right nutrients, though, and you can stop cramps before they start.

Eat more fish, dark leafy greens, and flaxseed oil.

These are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which create anti-inflammatory prostaglandins—not agonizing cramps.

Mammograms

Visualize a Pain-Free Exam

Elaine Filose, 52, had a severe case of mammogram phobia. The night before a mammogram, she worried herself sick. Her chest tightened and her heart raced with fear and anxiety, followed by stomach cramps and diarrhea. She couldn't eat, sleep, or stop herself from shaking.

Fears of breast cancer terrified Filose, and the discomfort of the exam didn't help. Her mammograms never showed any sign of cancer. Nevertheless, "I was a total wreck," says Filose.

After years of this annual ordeal, a good friend

introduced Filose to Laurie Nadel, Ph.D., a doctor of clinical hypnotherapy in New York City who has coached many women in calming mammogram jitters.

After four sessions of relaxation and visualization exercises, Filose overcame her phobia.

"Just about every woman experiences a certain degree of apprehension when getting a mammogram," says Dr. Nadel, whose first mammogram was so painful that she put off scheduling another one for years. "I used mental imagery to pick up the phone and make another appointment."

The trick is to give yourself a boost by remembering a positive experience, says Dr. Nadel.

If your mammogram appointment is just

around the corner, practice this exercise three times a day, then again just before you step up to the mammography plate.

Ball up your hands into fists. Close your eyes and think about a wonderful place where you once felt calm, relaxed, and safe. Remember the sights, sounds, and smells as you relive every moment.

To enhance your sense of peace, add more color to that picture-perfect place in your mind. Make the images larger or sharper, or increase the tightness of your fists until your calmness reaches its peak like a chord or music.

As your anxiety slowly fades, release your hands, shake them out, and open your eyes. To recapture that warm, fuzzy feeling, make those fists again and say to yourself, "Take me back."

The more you practice this exercise, the faster your brain will make the connection between your fists and total calm, says Dr. Nadel. "The painful part takes 3 seconds, then it's over. If you learn to quickly flood your body with feelings of happiness, you'll reduce the perception of anticipated pain."

Helpful Hint

Schedule your mammogram about 1 week after the last day of your menstrual period, when breast swelling and tenderness is minimal. Also, a few weeks before your appointment, cut down on caffeine and start taking 200 to 400 IU of vitamin E daily to further reduce discomfort. ■

Marital Conflict

His and Hers Fighting Styles: Follow These Ground Rules

Many women have been taught to believe that the only functional marriage is an argument-free marriage. "That's a myth," says Michele Weiner-Davis, couples counselor in Woodstock, Illinois, and author of *Divorce Busting and Getting Through to the Man You Love*. "In any relationship, conflict is inevitable. Women need to know that. Happy couples simply find ways to deal with these differences."

Money is the number one issue couples fight about, followed by children, chores, communication, in-laws, and careers.

Since women are the ones who typically bring up the subjects that men would rather not discuss, they need to know the ground rules.

Timing is everything. Ask your guy if now is a good time to talk. If not, ask if some other time within the next 24 hours would be better.

Start on a positive note. "The outcome of a chess game can be dictated by the first move. So, too, in conversation," Weiner-Davis says. Suppose you're upset that your husband hasn't been spending enough time with you lately. "Many women will say, 'I feel like you just don't care about my feelings.'" Weiner-Davis says. "At that point, he'll start to defend himself." Instead,

turn your complaint into a compliment. Say, "I've really been missing you lately. I wonder if we could spend more time together."

Stick to the point. "A woman should list two or three points she wants to make, state them in a positive way, and stop talking," Weiner-Davis says. "If she's not succinct, she'll lose his attention."

Carefully scan his response. Although two-thirds of what he does say might be critical ("You're so invested with the kids that you

DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE

Resist the temptation to bring up every offense your spouse has ever committed. Stay focused on the here and now. "I've seen so many women go on and on about their feelings, giving example after example, and raising points from the past," Weiner-Davis says. "When they do that, they lose their partners."

wouldn't notice if I was around. You don't even notice what I do around the house."), the other third might be positive ("But I do agree it would be great if we could spend some time together"). "Filter out the stuff that won't lead anywhere and listen for those gems," Weiner-Davis says.

"That's what you should respond to."

Fight fair. Take turns talking without interruption. Strive for clarity. Suggest compromises. If you don't reach an understanding immediately, give him a few days to come around.

If the temperature's rising, call a time out. >>

designed to give you the dose of light you need. This can be expensive, however. Prices range from \$250 to \$500. Some health insurance plans may pay for part of the cost. Light boxes may be purchased through Apollo Light Systems, 352 West 1060 South, Orem, UT 84058, or The SunBox Company, 19217 Orbit Drive, Gaithersburg, MD 20879, among others.

If You Can't Afford a Light Box

Simply trying to get more light into your life may help. Dr. Rosenthal recommends these methods.

Get outdoors while it's daylight. In the winter, days are short, so it's best to try and get out during the brightest part of the day. So take a stroll in the late

morning or during a lunch break. Always wear a sun-screen to protect your skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Paint rooms a light color. This will help amplify whatever natural light may be coming through the windows.

Increase indoor light with lamps and skylights. Add mirrors, too, which reflect light and make a room even brighter.

Longevity

A Life-Extension Program That Pays Dividends Now

Ever wonder why your neighbor looks as though she's in her early forties, but is really 55? Or, why your 90-year-old grandmother has as much spunk and mental sharpness as women half her age?

"Some people don't just look young for their age, they are young for their age," says Michael F. Roizen, M.D., a preventive gerontologist and professor of medicine, anesthesia, and critical care at the University of Chicago and author of *RealAge*. "They are physiologically and mentally as active and vibrant as those who are much younger. As a result, they live longer, healthier lives." And luck has little to do with it.

"Genes do play part of the role," says Dr. Roizen. "But lifestyle choices and behaviors have far more impact on longevity and health than heredity." In fact, research conducted by Dr. Roizen shows that daily aerobic exercise; strength training; a low-fat, nutrient-rich diet; and lots of social interaction can make you feel up to 26 years younger.

Feasting on antiaging foods is one way to add years to your life and life to your years (see page 8). Here's what else Dr. Roizen recommends.

Pop a "life insurance" supplement. Taking a multivitamin each day will help ensure that you're getting all the nutrients you need even when you're not eating right. The best kind: One without added iron and with less than 8,000 IU of vitamin A. High iron intake may be linked to heart disease. Too much vitamin A can cause many problems, ranging from headaches and nausea to bone problems and liver damage.

You'll also want to supple-

DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE

Steer clear of tanning booths—they won't help SAD symptoms. Besides the fact that your eyes are covered during tanning sessions, the ultraviolet light given off by tanning beds doesn't work as well as other types of light. What's more, the UV light can damage your skin.

Eliminate anything that might block natural light. That includes hedges or branches in front of your windows. It also means washing windows regu-

larly—you'd be surprised how much brighter a room looks with clean windows.

Plan a winter vacation in a sunny place.

Helpful Hint

Designate one room in your home as a "bright room." Ideally, it should have the biggest windows that let in the most light. Give it a bright coat of paint. Clear out all dark rugs and furniture, and fill it up with lamps and mirrors or other light-reflective surfaces. ■

ment with 600 milligrams or more (up to 2,000 milligrams) of vitamin C, 400 IU of vitamin E, and 1,200 milligrams of calcium daily, says Dr. Roizen. **Vitamin C and E are powerful antioxidants that mop up free radicals, those menacing molecules that damage cells, age arteries, and weaken your immune system.** Without them, you're at a greater risk for heart disease, cancer, and other forms of aging. Calcium preserves bone density, keeping your bones strong no matter how many candles you have on your birthday cake. Excess vitamin C may cause diarrhea in some

people. If that happens, cut back.

Break a sweat. Daily aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, swimming, jogging, cycling, or dance aerobics slows down your body's aging process. How? "Any physical activity that gets your heart and lungs pumping will lower your risk of heart disease, heart attack, stroke, colon cancer, breast cancer, arthritis, and diabetes—debilitating diseases that prematurely age you," says Dr. Roizen. For example, in the Nurses' Health Study, an ongoing study of 80,000 women, researchers found that women who walked at least 3 hours per week had a 40 percent

lower risk of heart attack and stroke than women who got little or no exercise.

Pump some iron. Unlike aerobic exercise, strength training—with dumbbells or weight machines—builds muscle. By building muscle, you'll get stronger. And that means that daily activities >>



such as carrying groceries and walking up and down stairs won't be a chore, even as you age.

You'll also prevent osteoporosis (the loss of bone density) and the bone fractures that often follow, because strength training preserves and builds bone, says Dr. Roizen. Shoot for three weight-training workouts a week and make sure you exercise all your major muscle groups such as your chest, back, shoulders, arms, legs, and abdominals.

You can work out in a gym, but all you really need is a pair of 2- to 5-pound dumbbells or whatever is right for you. Begin with a weight that you can comfortably do one set of 8 to 12 reps for each exercise. Then try to work up to two and finally three sets. (See the whole-body workout beginning on page 467.)

Brush and floss your teeth daily. Preliminary studies show that gingivitis and periodontal disease lead to the release of inflammatory or toxic substances and certain bacteria into the bloodstream. That, in turn, sets up an immune reaction that

STRENGTHEN YOUR FAITH

Lots of research shows that people who attend worship services regularly and practice their faith are far less likely to get sick and suffer from stress than people who don't.



What's more, one study showed that women who attend church once a week or more are one-third less likely to die prematurely than those who don't. And that's after taking into account smoking, drinking, exercise, and weight status. Part of the reason: increased social interaction with fellow believers. As a result, they have lower blood

pressure, lower incidences of heart disease, emphysema, suicide, and often recover faster from physical and mental illness. So if you don't already pray, meditate, or attend religious services regularly, now is a good time to start.

enables plaque to form in arteries, leading to heart disease and possibly stroke.

Eat breakfast. One study found that people who ate breakfast each day were less depressed and stressed than those who did not. Breakfast eaters were also less likely to smoke, plus they drank less alcohol and ate healthier diets, all factors that lead to longevity.

Get 7 hours of sleep a night. Sleep deprivation makes you more prone to accidents and other life-threatening situations.

Laugh more often. Laughter is a whole-body stress reducer that relieves anxiety and tension.

Get some sun—but not too much. Ten to 20 minutes of sun each day helps your body produce active vitamin D, which aids calcium absorption.

Own a dog—and walk it. Dog owners stay young longer, presumably because they get exercise caring for their dogs, and they benefit from the canine companionship. ■

Air Bags

Survive a Crash and Inflation

Q: What's the difference between a windbag and an air bag?

A: *One will bore you to death, the other will save your life.*

Tucked out of sight in the steering wheel or dashboard as you drive, air bags were designed to provide an instant cushion between your head, neck, and chest and the steering wheel and dashboard during a collision. In order to inflate quickly on impact, these balloon-like apparatuses burst from their compartments at speeds up to 200 miles per hour. So women who need to sit closer to where an air bag is deployed to reach the brake and accelerator or who don't wear seat belts have occasionally suffered minor cuts, bruises, and abrasions from the force of its inflation. A few have died.

Adults under 5 feet 2 inches, most of whom are women, are at greatest risk. But anyone—male or female, short or tall—can avoid air-bag injuries.

“Air bags have saved a lot of lives,” says Mitch Fuqua, a spokesperson for AAA (American Automobile Association) in Heathrow, Florida. “Women are much safer with air bags than without them,” he says.

To avoid an air-bag injury, follow these guidelines set by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and AAA.

Buckle up. Secured across your hips, chest, and shoulders,

seat belts keep you a safe distance from the air bag and prevent you from flying forward into a deployed air bag when you brake. (Most serious injuries from air bags occurred when occupants were driving unbelted or seated too close to the wheel.)

If your steering wheel tilts, direct it toward your chest, not your head. This directs the air bag, if deployed, toward your chest instead of the more vulnerable head and neck areas.

Sit at least 10 inches from the wheel. The farther away from the steering wheel you sit,

DON'T MAKE THIS MISTAKE

Holding the wheel at the 12 o'clock position can result in a broken arm if the air bag deploys while you're driving, says Fuqua.

the less force you'll experience when the air bag deploys. Air bags can cause the most injury within the first 2 to 3 inches of inflation, so placing yourself 10 inches away should provide ample protection. Measure the 10 inches from the center of your breastbone to the center of the air-bag cover.

Recline your seat. To help achieve that safety margin, recline your seat. If that makes it tough to see the road, raise your car seat or sit on a firm, nonslippery cushion.

Forget about driving with your hands in the 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock position, which you learned in driver education. Instead, hold the steering wheel in the 9 and 3 position. That keeps your arms apart and leaves space for the air bag to inflate, says Fuqua. And don't slump forward toward the steering wheel as you drive. ■

Breast Pain and Swelling

Soothe Tender Breasts with an Herbal Wrap

Right before your period, something as simple as a hug can be unbearable. When your estrogen levels are at their highest, your breasts become achy. Discomfort ranges from mild tenderness in some women to excruciating pain in others.

Sometimes, tender fluid-filled cysts can appear in your breasts' milk glands. Doctors refer to this as fibrocystic breast disease (although it's not really a disease). It's caused by accumulated fluid and strands of fibrous tissue, and it's very common.

If you've seen your doctor and she has assured you that you have nothing serious to worry about, here are two herbal compresses you can

apply to your breasts to relieve the pain and inflammation, courtesy of Mindy Green, a founder and professional member of the American

Herbalists Guild and director of education services for the Herb Research Foundation in Boulder, Colorado.

Wrap them in ginger. This pungent herb is a powerful anti-inflammatory that will relieve the soreness and reduce swelling, says Green. Grate ¼ cup of the fresh herb. Sprinkle the shavings evenly on a thin cloth. Fold it in half. Then, wet it with hot water. Apply it to each breast for 10 to 20 minutes. Repeat two or three times a day, if possible.

If using powdered ginger—the kind found in your spice rack—is more convenient, add 1 teaspoon of powdered ginger

FOUR WAYS TO DISSOLVE HARMLESS BREAST LUMPS

If you have been diagnosed with fibrocystic breasts, these doctor-recommended strategies may help reduce lumps—or at least get rid of the pain.

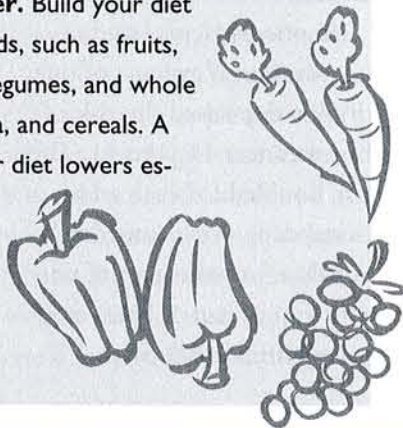
Strike oil. Evening primrose oil is an anti-inflammatory that can relieve tenderness and help shrink breast cysts. Take one or two 500-milligram capsules three times a day.

Cut the caffeine. Coffee, tea, cola, and chocolate all contain methylxanthines, naturally occurring substances that may contribute to the problem.

Pop extra E. Some studies have shown that, taken in significant doses, vitamin E can prevent breast lumps from

returning. Vitamin E encourages your body to get rid of excess estrogen, which seems to aggravate the condition. Take 400 to 600 IU a day. (Get your doctor's go-ahead first.)

Feast on fiber. Build your diet around plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and legumes, and whole grain bread, pasta, and cereals. A low-fat, high-fiber diet lowers estrogen levels, which means less lumpiness and discomfort.



Breast Reconstruction Surgery Stretches to Speed Recovery

One out of three women who has a mastectomy for breast cancer elects to have breast reconstruction immediately after surgery. Using either an implant or skin and fat “borrowed” from the abdomen, surgeons can recreate a fairly natural looking new breast, with a reasonable facsimile of a nipple.

You can—and should—do everything you can do to speed healing from postmastectomy reconstruction, says G. Patrick Maxwell, M.D., director of the Institute for Reconstructive Surgery at Baptist Hospital in Nashville.

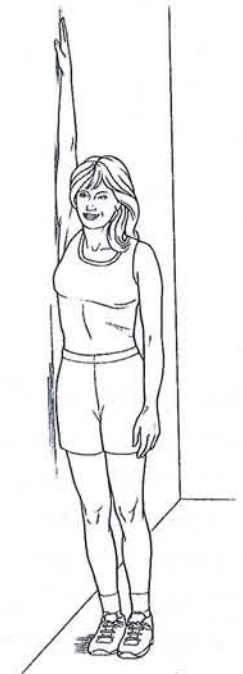
“The whole purpose of breast reconstruction is emotional and physical healing,” says Dr. Maxwell. The faster you heal physically, the more fully you’ll heal emotionally.

Specifically, it’s critical that you perform certain stretches to prevent excessive scarring, stiffness, and a “frozen shoulder,” says Dr. Maxwell. “The body tries to curl up as it forms scars, making you hunch down and your arm flex inward,” he explains.

As soon as any swelling and tenderness from your reconstruction has subsided, Dr. Maxwell suggests stretching your arms and back with the following exercises. (Check with your surgeon to be sure these are appropriate for you and report

any pain you may feel during or after doing these stretches.)

Arm stretch: Stand with your side to the wall. Lift >>



NEWS FLASH

If you ever need breast cancer surgery, check your calendar. A study found that women who undergo breast cancer surgery after day 12 and before day 3 of their menstrual cycles have a better long-term prognosis than those who have the surgery at other times.

to 2 cups of hot water. Dip a wash cloth in the solution and apply it to your skin.

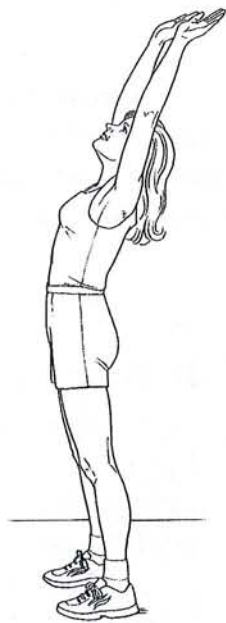
Soothe with castor oil.

Castor oil is great for relieving tenderness and breaking up fibrous tissue, says Green. Dip a dry washcloth in some castor oil and apply it to your breasts. Place a hot-water bottle on top of the washcloth for 20 to 30 minutes. Or, rub the castor oil directly onto your breasts. Cover them with plastic wrap and a thin towel. Place a hot-water bottle on top for the same amount of time.

Helpful Hint

If you have sensitive skin, rub some vegetable oil on your breasts before applying the ginger compress. The oil may help prevent your skin from turning red and overheating. ■

your arm and touch the wall with your arm at a right angle to the wall. Keep stepping closer to the wall, moving your arm up until it is extended over your head and your armpit is pushing into the wall. (It may take a few weeks before you can get your arm all the way up.) Change sides and do the other arm.



Back stretch: Extend your hands straight up in the air and bend backward, arching your back. If you don't have enough range of motion in your arms, put your hands on your upper buttocks instead. ■

Brittle Nails

Out with Quick-Drying Polish

What woman hasn't found herself flailing her arms wildly, trying to speed-dry her nails while her husband waits so that they can leave for a party? Or putting on a pair of pantyhose with half-dry nails, only to botch the polish and the stockings?

Quick-dry nail polishes are incredibly convenient. Your nails dry in 60 seconds or less. But they have a couple of drawbacks.

"Quick-drying nail polishes chip faster than regular polish, and they can also make your nails more brittle," says Diane Hengstler, a supervisor and manicurist at Gordon Phillips beauty school in Philadelphia. The quick-drying varieties contain more formaldehyde and alcohol than regular polish, so they dry faster. But those same ingredients dry out your nails and make them prone to splitting, peeling, and breaking.

So if your nails are brittle, use regular polish instead, says Hengstler. **To speed-dry your nails naturally,** dump a tray of ice cubes into your bathroom sink and fill it with cold water. Then, after each coat, dip your newly painted nails

into the cold water for a minute or two. When you take your hands out of the water, your nail polish will be miraculously dry.

"The cold water acts as a curing agent to set the polish," explains Hengstler. (Drying your nails with your blow dryer on the cool setting also works, though not as quickly as cold water.)

Helpful Hint

Stash a few tubes of petroleum jelly that's marketed for chapped lips in convenient places: your purse, desk drawer, and car. A few times a day, rub it on your nails and cuticles. **It's an easy, inexpensive remedy for dry, brittle nails.** ■

