



Well woman, Whole woman....

Your life after diagnosis with breast cancer

Did you know?

If you have breast cancer that your insurance company is required to cover breast reconstructive surgery including breast reduction, breast lift or augmentation on the other side to optimize symmetry. In 1998 a law was passed called the Federal Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act. This law mandates that after breast cancer surgery your insurance has to cover breast reconstruction and breast symmetry surgeries. The law also requires your insurance to cover breast prosthesis and treatments of other physical complications.

What does that mean?

Your insurance is required to cover your breast reconstruction. And if in a perfect world you would be interested in being a little smaller, little bigger or more perky then you have the option to consider breast reduction, breast lift or breast augmentation on you other breast or even to a have a prevention mastectomy and reconstruction.

What if I do not know yet what cancer treatment surgery I am going to have?

As part of your preparation for your breast cancer treatment it is helpful to have a consultation with a plastic surgeon who specializes in breast reconstruction Even if you are considering lumpectomy, newer techniques allow your cancer treatment surgery to be combined with your breast reshaping surgery. This is called the "oncoplastic" technique. In this surgery your breast surgeon and your plastic surgeon work together to remove the cancer and then reshape your breast so that your results after radiation will be optimized.

If I am going to have lumpectomy and radiation, why should I see a plastic surgeon?

A consultation with a plastic surgeon will allow you to better understand how lumpectomy and radiation may affect the long term appearance of your breast. If a lady has large or saggy breasts, the radiation oncologist find it easier to plan the treatment if that breast is reshaped and resized prior to the radiation. This technique of removing the breast cancer and also reshaping your breast is called Oncoplastic surgery. The plastic surgeon is able to reshape your breast once the breast surgeon has removed the tumor.

What if I already had my breast cancer surgery?

You are eligible for reconstruction of that breast whether you had lumpectomy or a mastectomy and you are eligible for what ever surgery is required on your other breast to

optimize your symmetry. Breast reconstruction can be done many years after the original breast cancer surgery as long as a woman is healthy.

What if I have already had lumpectomy and breast radiation?

The changes associated with radiation will alter techniques that can be used to reshape your breast. Nevertheless it is possible to improve your breast shape following lumpectomy and radiation.

How long will my recovery be?

Your recovery time is dependant on the type of breast cancer treatment that you have. A typical breast reconstruction is a series of surgeries over the course of 6-9 months. Once this is complete then a woman does not require mammograms on the reconstructed breast. The recoveries after breast reduction, lift and augmentation typically are 4-6 weeks prior to vigorous activity.

After breast reconstruction do I need to have mammograms?

While it is important to continue with regular self exam of your breast reconstruction, it is not necessary to have a mammogram of your reconstructed breast. If you were to feel anything new, then you may benefit from an ultrasound or MRI after seeing your surgeon.

What if I do not want to have reconstruction but have a large saggy breast on the other side?

There are women who either choose not to have reconstruction or because of advanced age are not prepared to have breast reconstruction. However, many of these ladies would benefit from having a breast reduction or lift on their remaining breast to aid in being able to use a smaller external prosthesis. Your insurance will cover breast reduction/lift as part of your breast cancer treatment. This is not considered cosmetic

How do I learn more about my treatment options?

It is important to establish a good working relationship with your team of physicians. The nurse navigator is another excellent resource to assist you with your questions. While your general surgeon can answer basic questions about your reconstructive options, a board certified plastic surgeon will be able to answer your questions in depth. Also your plastic surgeon can introduce you to other women who have had breast reconstruction who can encourage you especially in the practical matters of your recovery. While there is no end to the amount of information on the internet, many women find this overwhelming and are challenged to know what specifically apply to them. If you have access to a plastic surgeon with fellowship expertise in breast reconstruction then he/she will be best experienced to provide your reconstructive care and review your options with you whether you choose total breast reconstruction or the oncoplastic technique of lumpectomy.

For more information go to www.drdianebowen.com or call 912-634-1993 for an appointment.