

## Advice for patients following breast reconstruction - bras and supportive underwear

Following breast surgery, you will need to wear a support bra day and night for four weeks. The surgery may be breast reconstruction, reduction or involve implants. A good supporting bra will increase comfort post-operatively and enhance your new breast shape. If you have implants it will assist in maintaining the implants in the desired position.

The bras will need to be purchased prior to your admission to hospital. You will need a minimum of two sports or firm control bras; one to wear and one to wash. All women are different and some may experience more swelling than others, it is often difficult to estimate the correct size. Do not remove the labels from your bras and keep your receipt so they may be exchanged if necessary.

### Choosing your bra:

- The bra must be comfortable, supportive and with no underwire.
- It should preferably seam free to avoid any irritation to incisions and scarring.
- You will need to buy a bra that is a **band size bigger** than you would normally wear, but the **same cup size**. Therefore if you would normally be a 34D you need to purchase a 36D. This will allow for any post-operative dressings and any swelling which may occur.
- If you are having a bilateral reconstruction and are unsure of what your new size may be, there are bras available with expandable cups which may be suitable (please see 'where to purchase your garments' on page 2)
- Please be aware that if you are having a flap reconstruction, the bra you wear immediately after surgery will be cut to allow for observation of your new flap - it is therefore advisable not to buy an expensive bra for this purpose. (Bras with foam cups are **not** suitable following flap reconstruction surgery).
- A bra extender may be used in a back fastening bra to allow for more room initially following surgery.

### Supportive underwear

If you are having breast reconstruction using tissue from your abdomen or liposuction, you will also require firm control support pants. These pants give abdominal support following surgery, reduce excessive swelling in the tissues and may help the lymphatic system get rid of excess fluid following your procedure, reducing the risk of fluid build-up (seroma formation).



We recommend that the pants are worn for six weeks day and night if possible. Initially following surgery, wearing your usual pants underneath may make them easier to get on and off.

### Choosing your support pants

- The pants should be supportive, often labelled as firm control – they should not be too tight as they need to be removed to use the toilet
- If the tissue is being taken from your tummy, they should have a high waist and come up to near the bottom of your bra
- No bone should be present
- If the tissue is being taken from your inner thighs / or liposuction from your thighs; the pants should have legs in them - cycling shorts are also suitable following this type of surgery
- They will probably not be cotton; cotton briefs may be worn underneath for comfort
- **Buy them in your usual size or one size up.**

### Where to purchase your garments

You may wish to explore suppliers of bras and supportive underwear. There are various places where you can buy these and some are listed below. Unfortunately, The Royal Marsden is unable to recommend any specific supplier. **If you choose to buy from one of the suppliers below, this is a financial transaction entirely between you and the supplier and The Royal Marsden does not have any involvement with this.**

**Department stores:** many department stores, such as John Lewis and Marks & Spencer, have a good range of brands available and have staff trained to fit garments for women having surgery for breast reconstruction.

**Supermarkets:** stores such as Tesco, Primark and Asda have lower cost garments which are suitable following surgery.

**Independent retailers:** also have a good range of brands and trained staff to provide fitting advice. You may find that if you are fitted for a bra, the size differs depending on the retailer.

**Online retailers:** there are many online retailers where garments may be purchased, for example: [www.brasisters.co.uk](http://www.brasisters.co.uk) provide specialist lingerie, swimwear and a post-mastectomy fitting service [www.macom-medical.com](http://www.macom-medical.com) [www.marksandspencer.com](http://www.marksandspencer.com) (both include bras with expandable cups) [www.bravissimo.com](http://www.bravissimo.com) [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

### Contact details

For any further advice, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist.



**Chelsea:**

Plastic Surgery Nurse Specialist (NHS)	020 7811 8318
Plastic Surgery Nurse Specialist (Private care)	020 7352 8171 ex. 1573
Breast Care Nurses (NHS)	020 8915 6899

**Sutton:**

Plastic Surgery Nurse Specialist (NHS & Private care):	020 8742 6011 ex. 4345
Breast Care Nurses (NHS)	020 8661 3027
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