

Gynaecomastia

Male Breast Reduction | Patient Information

What is Gynaecomastia?

Gynaecomastia (pronounced guy-ne-co-mastia) is a medical term meaning male breast enlargement. In most cases there is no known cause and, although rarely talked about, it is a common condition. For men who feel self-conscious about their appearance, male breast-reduction surgery can be helpful. The procedure removes tissue from the breasts, and in extreme cases excess skin.

Who is most likely to experience gynaecomastia?

Most teenage boys experience some degree of breast enlargement affecting one or both breasts. However, by early adulthood less than 10% have a residual problem. This incidence rises with age, reaching approximately 30% (1 in 3) in older men. Rarely, the breast enlargement can be caused by medicines (for high blood pressure, heart disease and prostate cancer), drugs (such as marijuana and anabolic steroids), some diseases (such as liver failure and some cancers) and some very rare congenital abnormalities (errors of development that one is born with). These causes should be excluded by the surgeon during an initial consultation. Additional information will be needed at this consultation regarding overall health, chest size and body shape, previous chest surgery, any bleeding tendencies and healing capabilities, some of which will be affected by smoking, alcohol and various medications.

Is the procedure right for me?

A detailed consultation with your consultant plastic surgeon is essential prior to undergoing any surgical procedure. During the consultation, your surgeon will discuss your area/s of concern, desired improvements, options available (including no treatment at all) and expected outcomes. Your surgeon will examine you and may take some photographs for your medical records. They will ask you if you want to have someone with you during the examination and ask you to sign a consent form for taking, storing, and using the photographs. The surgeon will measure your height and weight to make sure that it is safe to do an operation. If you are overweight, your surgeon may suggest delaying your operation. If you decide to proceed with surgery, you will be given a 'cooling-off' period of at least 2 weeks between initial consultation and the date of your operation to ensure you have ample time to reflect on all aspects of the procedure before proceeding (although please bear in mind the waiting lists for our surgeons mean this period is invariably significantly longer).

How is the procedure carried out?

Should male breast reduction be agreed upon as the most suitable course of treatment, the procedure will be carried out by your surgeon in our state-of-the-art operating theatre. The breast is made up of two main components, glandular tissue (firm and dense) and fatty tissue (soft). The ratio of glandular to fatty tissue in any breast varies from individual to individual and in gynaecomastia there may be an excess of both. If there is predominantly a diffuse fatty enlargement of the breast, liposuction is the usual treatment. This involves removing the tissue through a small cannula inserted via a 3-4mm incision (please see our patient information sheet on liposuction for more detail). If excess glandular tissue is the primary cause of breast enlargement, it may need to be excised with a scalpel. This will leave a scar, usually around the nipple edge. This excision can be performed alone or in conjunction with liposuction. Major reductions that involve the removal of a significant amount of tissue and skin may require larger incisions that result in more obvious scars. Most operations for gynaecomastia take about 90 minutes to complete and are performed under general anaesthesia, or in some cases, under local anaesthesia with sedation. Following surgery, the skin edges are closed with dissolvable stitches and dressings are applied.

Recovery and aftercare

Following surgery, the chest will be swollen and bruised for a while and it can be difficult to assess the full effect of the operation. It is common for the surgical site/s to ooze a little, this is usually associated with the local anaesthetic discharging but can look a little pink. Swelling at the treatment site should be expected for at least 10 days. To help reduce swelling, patients should wear the provided compression garment continuously for 6 weeks. It is advisable to refrain from exercise for around 4 weeks and, in general, it takes about 6 weeks before one can return to completely normal activities.

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Risks and Complications

All surgical procedures are associated with risks. Your surgeon will explain these in detail during initial consultation, enabling you to reach an informed decision on whether you wish to proceed. Serious complications are uncommon, however patients should be aware of the following complications prior to undergoing male breast reduction. Specific complications may include inadequate removal of breast tissue, an uneven contour to the chest or reduced nipple sensation. If an excision has been performed, rather than liposuction, then a blood clot can form that may need to be drained at a second operation. More general risks of surgery include-

- Anaesthesia risks
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Poor scarring of skin
- Fluid accumulation (seroma)
- Pain, which may persist
- Possibility of revisional surgery

Results

The results of male breast reduction surgery are not immediately visible as swelling can take a long time to settle you may not see the full benefit of the operation for up to six months. Over time, post-surgical swelling will subside, and incision lines will fade. Satisfaction with your new image should continue to grow as you fully recover from surgery. To achieve optimal results, it is important that you follow your surgeon's post-operative instructions and follow-up visits.

Cost

Prices for gynaecomastia surgery can vary. Costs may include-

- Anaesthesia fees
- Hospital or surgical facility costs
- Medical tests
- Post-surgery garments
- Prescriptions for medication
- Surgeon's fee

After consultation and if you are planning to proceed with surgery, you will be given a written quotation regarding the cost of the planned procedure.

Alternative treatments

Depending on your specific needs and concerns, alternative non-surgical alternatives to male breast reduction surgery may be considered. Cryolipolysis (CoolSculpting, often referred to as fat freezing) which uses carefully controlled, cold temperatures to remove fat cells is one such non-surgical option you may also wish to explore.

If you experience any problems or have concerns following surgery, please do not hesitate to call our direct patient line for assistance on 07908 891059.

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Pre-Operative Preparations

6 week period before surgery-

Patients requiring twilight or general anaesthesia should not travel long haul for the 6 week period before and 6 week period after surgery.

2 weeks before surgery-

We would recommend that you start taking Arnica anti-bruising tablets, three times a day, 2 weeks prior to and 2 weeks after surgery. These are available from several health and wellbeing stores, including Holland & Barratt.

1 week before surgery-

Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen, nurofen and other similar painkillers one week before and two weeks after surgery. Paracetamol is the safest painkiller to take, if necessary.

Stop taking Vitamin E and its compounds (such as evening primrose oil, fish oils, garlic and garlic capsules) 1 week before surgery and 2 weeks after surgery. Taking Vitamin E in any form can cause bleeding and post-operative complications.

1 day before and on the day of surgery-

Shower all over (including your hair and face) with Hibiscrub antiseptic liquid soap (provided on prescription from Coppergate Clinic) the day before and morning of your surgery before coming into the clinic. Do not apply moisturiser after showering.

Day of surgery-

Avoid eating solid food and milky drinks for 6 hours prior to your appointment for sedation. Water, clear drinks, black tea and black coffee can be consumed for up to 2 hours before your sedation/general anaesthetic.

Take your routine medicines at the usual time, unless advised otherwise and bring them with you (including inhalers).

Bring loose fitting, oversized clothing to wear after surgery.

Post-Operative Instructions

Average length of stay-

The surgery will be performed as a day case under a general anaesthetic or twilight anaesthesia unless your Surgeon advised otherwise during consultation. **If you live further than a 1 hour drive from the clinic, it is mandatory to stay in the vicinity until the following day.**

6 week period after surgery-

Patients requiring twilight or general anaesthesia should not travel long haul for the 6 week period before and 6 week period after surgery.

0-2 weeks after surgery

- It is essential to ensure activity is kept to a minimum and to rest as much as possible
- Wear the provided compression garment and TED stockings day and night, except for when showering
- Shower if you wish, but please be as quick as possible and do not linger. Dressings should be gently patted dry before the compression garment is put back on. At your follow up appointment, your surgeon will guide you on when leisurely showers and baths may resume
- Take Paracetamol as required (avoid aspirin, ibuprofen, nurofen and similar painkillers)
- Drink plenty of fluid to replace fluid removed during liposuction

2 weeks after surgery

- Gentle activity may resume (for example driving) but do listen to your body- it will tell you if you are overdoing things

2-4 weeks after surgery

- Wear the provided compression garment during the day

6 weeks after surgery

- Static exercises such as cycling, cross training and progressive walking may resume

6-12 weeks after surgery

- Swimming and more strenuous exercise may resume, as advised by your surgeon at your follow up appointment

12 weeks after surgery

- Moisturise and massage the scars and breast tissue

General Scar Care

Scars should be supported by micropore tape for the first 2 weeks post-surgery. During this period, tape should be left on during baths and showers and simply patted dry afterwards. After 2 weeks, as soon as the tape naturally starts to become loose, it may be gently removed and discarded.

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