

# BREAST PROSTHESES, BRAS AND CLOTHES AFTER BREAST SURGERY

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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Choosing not to have breast reconstruction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What to wear in the first weeks after surgery</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Choosing a bra while you are healing</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Buying a bra</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Breast prostheses</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Getting your prosthesis</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Looking after your prosthesis</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Replacing a prosthesis</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Air travel with a prosthesis</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Not wearing a prosthesis</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Clothing</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Swimwear</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Further support</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Useful organisations and suppliers</b>	<b>31</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This booklet gives practical information about breast prostheses, bras and clothing for women who have had breast surgery.

A prosthesis is an artificial breast form that replaces the shape of all or part of a breast that has been removed.

Most of the information is aimed at people who have had surgery for breast cancer and have not had reconstruction (the creation of a new breast shape using surgery). However, it may also be useful for women whose breasts are naturally different from each other in size or shape, who have had part of their breast removed, or who have had breast reconstruction that has not given an even match.

There is information on different types of breast prostheses. For some women, wearing a prosthesis may be a temporary choice before reconstruction. Other women may choose not to have reconstruction, or be unable to have one, and find wearing a prosthesis an effective and suitable long-term choice. Some women choose not to have a reconstruction or use a prosthesis. Find out more about this in the ‘Not wearing a prosthesis’ section on page 25.

The booklet also describes what type of bra to wear at different stages after breast surgery, and how to find bras for the long term that you feel confident in and that suit your lifestyle.

We have included practical tips on wearing a prosthesis with different styles of clothing and swimwear. These tips may also be useful if you don’t wear a prosthesis.

If you have further questions or want more information, call our free Helpline on **0808 800 6000**. Find out more about how we can help in our ‘Further support’ section on page 30.

## CHOOSING NOT TO HAVE BREAST RECONSTRUCTION SURGERY

Many women choose not to have breast reconstruction. This can be for a number of different reasons.

Some women are less concerned than others about the changes to their body and feel reconstruction is not the right choice for them.

Others don't want to go through the extra surgery and recovery that breast reconstruction involves. Often more than one operation is needed to get the best result. There is also a risk the reconstruction could fail.

A reconstructed breast will not feel like a natural breast. Some women feel nothing will replace their natural breast.

There may be medical reasons why surgery is not possible. Women who are likely to need more treatment, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy, may be advised to delay having a reconstruction until treatment is completed.

Some women want time to adjust to their new body shape before deciding whether to have reconstruction.

Any decision you make about breast reconstruction should be based on whether it's right for you. If you would like more information on breast reconstruction, see our booklet **Breast reconstruction**.

## WHAT TO WEAR IN THE FIRST WEEKS AFTER SURGERY

Breast surgery, and sometimes radiotherapy, may make your chest area feel particularly sensitive. Wearing a bra may make you feel more comfortable, but this isn't always the case.

Your surgeon or breast care nurse may advise you on what bra to wear depending on the type of surgery you have had. You don't need to wear a specific post-surgery bra unless you are advised to.

If you are not given any advice about bras following surgery, check with your surgeon or breast care nurse what is best to wear.

In the first few weeks after surgery, most women wear a soft, non-wired bra that isn't too restrictive.

You may find a front-fastening bra easier to put on as your shoulder may be stiff at first. Our leaflet **Exercises after breast cancer surgery** has exercises to help ease stiffness.



Courtesy of Amoena

Your breast care nurse or one of the ward nurses will usually give you a fabric-covered temporary prosthesis, often called a 'softie' or 'cumfie/comfie', to wear during this time. The softie may ride up because it's so light. It may look better and feel more secure if you remove some of the stuffing (to help match to the size of the other breast if you have had a single mastectomy) and either stitch it to the bottom of your bra cup or keep it in place with a safety pin.



Courtesy of Eloise

Once your wound is healed and any swelling has gone down (usually within six to eight weeks) you can be fitted for a permanent prosthesis if you choose (see 'Breast prostheses' on page 12).

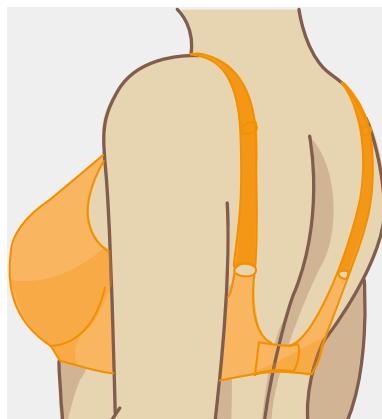
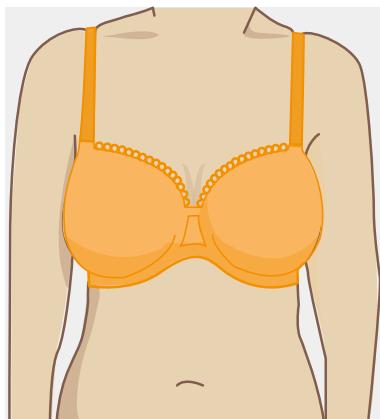
For more information on choosing not to wear a prosthesis see page 25.

## CHOOSING A BRA WHILE YOU ARE HEALING

For up to a year after surgery your shape and size may alter due to weight and treatment-related changes. During this time the type of bra you need may also change.

While the area recovers from surgery, the nerves repair and any skin changes from radiotherapy settle down, you may want to choose a bra that has:

- Soft seams
- A wide underband (the band that goes under the cups and round your back)
- Deep front and side panels
- Full cups
- Cup separation (the centre of the bra between the cups should sit flat on your chest)
- Fully adjustable straps
- A simple design (details on the bra, like lace, may make it less comfortable)
- No underwires (the wires sewn in under each cup)



It's best to avoid wearing an underwired bra while the area is recovering from surgery because the underwires can be uncomfortable. However, underwire bras can be worn when the area has healed.

Initially after breast surgery you may have some swelling. Try to find a bra that is a chest size bigger. For example, if you are a 34B, choose a 36B.

Where possible, choose bras that have a high cotton content. These will be gentler on your skin while it heals and will help you stay cooler if you're experiencing hot flushes.

Bra strap cushions can make the straps more comfortable on your shoulder and help the bra stay in place. You can buy these from lingerie shops or online.

Once the skin in the chest area has healed and settled down, which may take up to a year, you can wear any bra. However, if you're planning to wear a prosthesis, your bra will need to fit well and have enough support for your prosthesis.

Our leaflet **Your guide to a well-fitting bra** is for any woman who wants to know how a bra should fit. It includes illustrations and practical tips on how to make sure your bra fits comfortably and gives proper support.

For some women, surgery doesn't affect how they feel about themselves, but many others find it takes time to adapt to the changes. Our **Moving Forward** booklet includes topics such as body image and relationships after treatment has finished. You may also find it useful to read our booklet **Your body, intimacy and sex**, which includes a section on changes to your body after cancer treatment.

## BUYING A BRA

Most lingerie shops, and some high-street shops or department stores, have experienced bra fitters who will fit you and advise you on your size and a suitable bra.

As your shape and size may change during and after treatment, it's a good idea to have your bra size checked before you buy any new bras.

An experienced bra fitter will often have specialist training and experience in helping women who have had or are going to have breast surgery. It might be useful to call ahead and make an appointment to ensure you can be seen by a trained fitter.

You can buy post-surgery (mastectomy) bras from specialist suppliers, in person or online, that are designed for women who have had their breast(s) removed. Post-surgery bras are also available from high-street shops, which can often be a cheaper option. However, any bra is suitable providing it follows the points mentioned on page 8.

### Bra pockets

If you choose to wear a prosthesis, a well-fitting bra with a full cup is often all that's needed to hold your prosthesis in place. Many women find this creates a natural appearance and is secure enough.

However, some women prefer to have a bra with a pocket designed to help the prosthesis sit more securely in their bra.

Post-surgery bras come with bra pockets. You can adapt an ordinary bra by sewing a piece of stretchy material across the back of the bra cup to act as a pocket.

Pockets are also available to sew in yourself. These are available online from most mastectomy bra stockists. It's best to use loose stitches when attaching the pocket as if a pocket is sewn in too tightly it can affect the bra's shape.

## Financial help

Post-surgery bras are exempt from VAT if they're bought by someone who's had breast surgery.

The order forms on most websites and catalogues have a box you can tick so you don't have to pay VAT.

If you're buying a post-surgery bra from a shop, check with a member of staff before paying for your bra. Many shops may ask you to sign a VAT exemption form stating that you have had breast surgery. You shouldn't need to provide a doctor's letter or other medical proof.

Macmillan Cancer Support provides grants that can be used to buy post-surgery bras and swimwear. Contact them to find out if you are eligible for a grant by calling their Helpline 0808 808 0000 or through their website [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)

If you have been advised to wear a special bra and you or your partner are claiming certain benefits, you don't have to pay for it. The qualifying benefits are outlined in the Department of Health leaflet HC11, which you can get from the hospital, your nearest Jobcentre Plus or the NHS Business Service Authority website [nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme](http://nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme)

If you are not receiving a qualifying benefit but are on a low income you may still be eligible for a free post-surgery bra or help towards the cost of one under the NHS Low Income Scheme. To find out if the NHS Low Income Scheme can help and how to apply, visit [nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs](http://nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs) or call their helpline on 0300 330 1343.

# BREAST PROSTHESES

## What is a breast prosthesis?

A breast prosthesis is an artificial breast form that replaces the shape of all or part of the breast that has been removed.

It fits in a bra cup with or without a bra pocket (see ‘Bra pockets’ on page 10).

‘Prostheses’ is the word for more than one prosthesis.

Most breast prostheses are made from soft silicone gel (which is anti-allergenic), encased in a thin film. They’re moulded to resemble the natural shape of a woman’s breast, or part of a breast. The outer surface feels soft and smooth and may include a nipple outline.

There are also non-silicone breast forms, but these may not be available on the NHS. Talk to your fitter about the other breast form options.

## Prosthesis styles

Prostheses come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and skin tones. Most are made from materials that are designed to move, feel and weigh as similar to a natural breast as possible.

It’s important your prosthesis suits your lifestyle as much as possible. You may want to consider the different clothing styles you want to wear your prosthesis with (see the ‘Clothing’ and ‘Swimwear’ sections).

Sometimes people wear their temporary prosthesis (softie or cumfie/comfie) instead of a permanent prosthesis.

## Full or standard prosthesis

A full prosthesis is designed to go straight against the chest where all breast tissue has been removed. It’s matched in size, shape and skin tone to your other breast.

If you have had both breasts removed you can select the size you feel most comfortable with.



Courtesy of Amoena

### Partial or shaped prosthesis

A partial prosthesis is for women who have had part of their breast removed.

It's worn inside a bra and is shaped to fill out the breast outline. It's made of the same silicone material as most full prostheses.

### Shell prosthesis

This is a type of partial prosthesis that may be used if your breasts are different in size from each other.

It's a soft 'shell' of silicone that fits over your smaller breast so that it matches the larger one.

This type of prosthesis can also be useful:

- For women who have had breast reconstruction surgery where symmetry has not been achieved
- If an implant is in the process of being expanded (this is a type of breast reconstruction which happens over time, so the breast size will gradually increase until the size of the breast implant is similar to that of the remaining breast)
- If you are waiting for a breast reduction to achieve symmetry



Courtesy of Eloise

### **Stick-on prosthesis**

A stick-on prosthesis (full or partial) sticks directly onto the skin.

Most have a sticky surface as part of the prosthesis itself. They can be worn either by attaching it directly to the chest or as a regular prosthesis with a protective backing over the stick-on part.

These can suit women who are more physically active or who want to wear a less supportive bra, as not all of the weight is taken by the bra.

They can also be worn with strapless dresses and tops if the clothing is supportive enough (see ‘Clothing’ and ‘Swimwear’ sections).

Most women will be advised not to wear a stick-on prosthesis for 6–12 months after surgery or during (and sometimes after) radiotherapy as it may damage the skin.



Courtesy of Amoena

## Prosthesis shapes

### Symmetrical

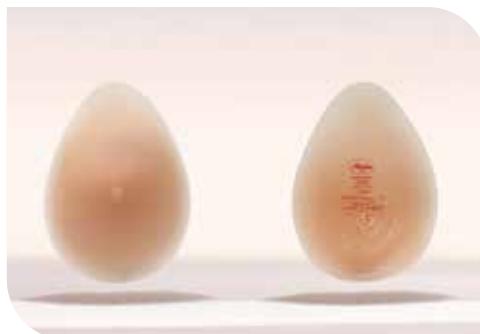
A symmetrical form is usually an oval or triangular shape that can be worn on either the left or right side.



Courtesy of Eloise

### Teardrop

The teardrop shape is often more suitable for women whose breasts are fuller in the lower and outer area and less full above the nipple. These can also be worn on either the right or left side.



Courtesy of Eloise

## **Asymmetrical**

These are generally more suitable for women who have had more tissue removed, as they have extensions to fit under the arm or upper chest. However, they can also be used by women who have not had extensive surgery. They are specifically designed for either the left or right side.

## **Made-to-measure**

This technique uses a 3D scanner to produce a computerised 3D image of the chest area, which can then be used to create a customised prosthesis shape. It is made to give a good fit to the chest, which stops the prosthesis moving, and is matched to your skin tone. Made-to-measure breast prostheses are not currently available on the NHS.

## **Air-inflated prosthesis**

This prosthesis comes with a pump so it can be inflated to the required size. It may not be available in all hospitals.



Courtesy of Amoena

## **Weight**

Silicone prostheses come in different weights.

The most suitable weight will depend on how heavy your other breast is. If you have had both breasts removed, you can choose the weight you feel most comfortable with.

If you have had a single mastectomy, a full-weight prosthesis may make you feel more balanced as it matches the weight of your other breast. However, if you need a large size, a lighter-weight version might be more comfortable.

If a breast prosthesis is too light it can move around or ride up so it's not level with the other breast. If this happens discuss it with the person who fitted your prosthesis as you may need to be reassessed or get advice about wearing a different type of bra.

## Materials

Most prostheses are made from silicone, which is a soft gel-like substance.

Foam prostheses are also available. A foam prosthesis is lighter and cooler. It may be more suitable if you're particularly active or you may find this style more comfortable in warmer weather.

Alternatively, some prostheses are filled with polypropylene beads. These mould into the shape of the bra and, as air is able to circulate, they are also cooler.

There are also breast forms that don't try to closely resemble a natural breast, for women who are looking for an alternative to a traditional soft silicone prosthesis.



Courtesy of Boost

## Skin tones

Although it might be difficult to achieve an exact match, many prostheses are available in different skin tones. Having a prosthesis that is as close to your skin tone as possible may help you feel more comfortable and confident.

Some companies make prostheses to order or can add colour to existing products. These specially made prostheses may take longer to supply and may not be available in all hospitals.

Some women make or buy a cover for their prosthesis that is a closer match to their own skin (see below).

Talk to your breast care nurse or fitter about finding a prosthesis that works with your skin tone.

## Backings and covers

The backing of most prostheses is made of the same material as the front. Some may have a different backing, such as fabric or a soft panel of gel, designed to make them more comfortable. Backings that can be moulded to fit an uneven chest wall are also available. Some prostheses have backings that allow more air flow and may be cooler.

You can use a soft fabric cover to fit over the silicone surface, although the prosthesis may not sit as well. This can prevent a rash or skin reaction developing, which might happen if you get hot and sweat behind your prosthesis.

You could also use a bra pocket to prevent this (see ‘Bra pockets’ on page 10). If you get a skin rash under the prosthesis, talk to your breast care nurse or GP.



Courtesy of Amoena

## Swim prostheses

Swim prostheses are made especially for use when swimming and don't get damaged by salt water or chlorine. Some swim prostheses are clear.



Courtesy of Eloise

## Prosthetic nipples

Prosthetic (artificial) nipples are made of soft silicone that can be worn on a reconstructed breast or prosthesis. They are either self-sticking or come with special skin glue that can hold the prosthetic nipple in place for several days.

Prosthetic nipples come in different sizes and skin colours but some hospitals custom-make them so they match the nipple on your other breast.

Some companies that manufacture prostheses also produce prosthetic nipples.

Alternatively, if you have had a single mastectomy, you might find it easier to use a nipple shield or cover on the other nipple so there is less of a difference. You can buy these from specialist suppliers and some high-street shops.



Courtesy of Amoena

## GETTING YOUR PROSTHESIS

Your breast care nurse will usually arrange a fitting appointment for you if you want to have a permanent prosthesis. If you're not given an appointment, ask your breast care nurse about this.

Your appointment will often be at your local hospital. The breast care nurse may do the fitting, or it may be done by another trained fitter, such as a surgical appliance officer or a representative from a prosthesis company.

Some women find it helpful to look at the selection of prostheses before their appointment, or even before their operation if possible, so they have an idea of what to expect. You can discuss this with your breast care nurse.

You'll usually be given the prosthesis at your fitting appointment or very soon afterwards. However, if you choose or need a style that is not in stock, you may have to wait longer.

Although it's not advisable to buy a prosthesis without trying it first, they are also available from specialist suppliers (see 'Useful organisations' on page 31).

### Will I have to pay for my prostheses?

NHS patients do not have to pay for their prosthesis. However, not all prostheses styles are available on the NHS.

If you are a private patient, check to see if your private health scheme covers the cost of your prosthesis. If you have to pay for your prosthesis you won't have to pay the VAT on it and the fitter will ask you to sign a VAT exemption form stating that you have had breast surgery. Alternatively, you may be able to have a prosthesis from the NHS in the same way that NHS patients can apply for a replacement (see 'Replacing your prosthesis' on page 22).

## The prosthesis fitting

### What to take with you

It's important to take a well-fitting bra (see page 8) to your appointment so you and the fitter can see how the prosthesis will sit in your bra.

It's useful to wear a plain, light-coloured top. This makes it easier to choose a prosthesis that gives you a good shape. You might prefer to wear a top that you can put on and take off quickly and easily. Or you may like to take a variety of tops with different necklines so you can see how it might work with different clothes.

It's important to talk about the styles of clothing you might want to wear your prosthesis with and if you're hoping to wear it for anything active. It might be useful to read the sections on 'Clothing' (page 26) and 'Swimwear' (page 28) before your appointment.

### At the fitting

The fitter will explain what will happen during the fitting and check you have a suitable bra.

At your appointment you should be given:

- A selection of sizes and styles of prostheses
- Privacy
- A large mirror and good light so you can see what the prosthesis looks like in your bra and with clothing over it. If you would prefer not to face the mirror, let your fitter know
- Enough time for you to make your choice

Your prosthesis should feel comfortable, give you a good shape and be a reasonable match to your skin tone.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR PROSTHESIS

The prosthesis fitter or nurse will give you information on how to care for your prosthesis. If you follow the advice on looking after your prosthesis it may last for several years.

Generally, you should look after a silicone breast prosthesis as you would your own skin. Wash it daily in warm soapy water and dry it with a towel.

If you have a stick-on prosthesis, you may need to use specific products to keep the prosthesis clean. Your prosthesis supplier can tell you more about these.

When you are not using a silicone prosthesis, store it in the shaped unit inside the box it came in.

Take care not to catch the prosthesis with sharp objects such as rings or pins as these may damage it, causing the silicone to leak. If a silicone prosthesis gets damaged, you can usually seal the tear temporarily with a sticking plaster.

## REPLACING A PROSTHESIS

A prosthesis will have a guarantee but the length of this can vary. Most prostheses will last longer than the period of the guarantee.

You can request a replacement prosthesis on the NHS when it is worn out. You can also ask for a reassessment if your prosthesis is no longer a good fit, even if it's still in good condition. This might happen if your weight or body shape changes or if your lifestyle changes (for example, if you become more active).

The process for getting a replacement prosthesis will depend on what happens in your local area and whether you have been discharged from the breast clinic. You can contact your breast clinic to arrange a prosthesis reassessment and fitting. Alternatively, you can contact your GP about a referral to the breast clinic or a prosthesis fitter.

New prosthesis styles are being developed all the time, so when you need a replacement it's a good idea to have a reassessment rather than directly replacing the one you already have.

If your prosthesis is damaged due to a manufacturing fault, you should be refitted with a new one free if you're an NHS patient. If it's damaged because you have punctured it or not followed the care instructions, you may be charged for replacing it.

If you had your surgery privately, ask your insurance company if they cover the cost of future replacement prostheses. If they don't, you can ask your GP to refer you to an NHS breast clinic or prosthesis fitter to be fitted with a free replacement.

### **Donating your used prosthesis**

You may wish to donate your used prosthesis, so it can be sent to countries where it is difficult or impossible to get a breast prosthesis. Contact Hospices of Hope ([hospicesofhope.co.uk](http://hospicesofhope.co.uk)) and Prostheses to India ([prosthesestointdia.co.uk](http://prosthesestointdia.co.uk)).

## AIR TRAVEL WITH A PROSTHESIS

If you're going on a flight and choose to pack your silicone prosthesis in your luggage, it's not unusual for some small air bubbles to appear in the back of your prosthesis. This is because the luggage hold is not pressurised. It will only happen if your prosthesis has a clear back.

These small bubbles will disappear shortly after you have landed and will cause no harm to your prosthesis.

If you have a lightweight prosthesis, the bubbles will appear as black dots. Again, these cause no harm and will disappear soon after you land.

## Airport security body scanning

People are randomly picked for a body scan or may be scanned if the metal detectors are activated. External breast prostheses will show up on body scanners.

You may be worried about what this means for your privacy and feel anxious at the idea of someone noticing your prosthesis.

If selected for a scan you might want to tell the security staff that you are wearing a breast prosthesis before being scanned. It may also be helpful for you to carry a letter from your GP or treatment team, confirming this.

## What to expect if you're scanned

The scan will take place in a security area with a member of airport staff present. It only takes a few seconds.

The images are viewed remotely and cannot be seen by the public. You can ask for a female screener (the security officer analysing the images).

The screener won't see you or be able to recognise you. The images don't show facial features, hair or skin tone, and are deleted immediately after analysis.

## NOT WEARING A PROSTHESES

You may choose not to wear a prosthesis. Many women prefer how this looks and feels.

If you have had one of your breasts removed, it's worth trying a number of different styles of clothing to find out what you feel most comfortable in.

You can make the two sides of your body seem more balanced by wearing dark or patterned fabrics and loose-fitting clothes. Or you could wear overshirts, jackets, scarves or jewellery to change the emphasis away from your chest.

Some women are comfortable with their shape and don't want to balance out both sides.

If you want to disguise a small difference between your breasts without using a prosthesis, a well-fitted padded bra can provide a good shape.

If you have had both of your breasts removed your chest area is more likely to be symmetrical. Many women prefer how this looks and feels but you could also try some of the ideas above.

Flat Friends is a charity that supports women who have had a single or double mastectomy without breast reconstruction. Their website [flatfriends.org.uk](http://flatfriends.org.uk) has information on post-mastectomy fashion and living flat.

## CLOTHING

It's not unusual to wonder what your appearance will be like after surgery or if your clothes will still look the same. With time, most women regain their confidence by knowing what works for them and what makes them feel more comfortable.

The following suggestions may be of interest to women:

- Who wear a prosthesis
- Whose breasts differ from one another in shape or size
- Who choose not to wear a prosthesis and live flat

### Strapless clothes and narrow straps

Some strapless clothes and clothes with narrow straps are made of material that provides good support or have an extra support panel in the chest area. This may be enough to hold your prosthesis in place, so it looks and feels comfortable.

If there's not enough support, you could try:

- Using a safety pin to attach a softie directly inside the garment
- Wearing a strapless bra with your usual prosthesis (providing your usual prosthesis is not too heavy for a strapless bra)
- Wearing a bra with transparent or decorative straps

### Low necklines

If you want to wear a low neckline but still cover part of your chest area you can try:

- A camisole or vest top underneath a V-necked top so that it is visible across the 'V'
- A camisole-style bra, available from some specialist suppliers, made with lace inserted between the cups that will cover the cleavage area
- A lightweight lacy or semi-transparent top worn over a low-necked item, to disguise the cleavage area while still allowing the clothing beneath to show through
- Using lingerie tape to attach clothing securely to the skin
- A tie-in fabric panel that covers the mid-chest, sometimes called a 'modesty' or 'dignity' panel

## Low backs

You can buy bra extenders from specialist suppliers and some department stores. Instead of fastening at your back, these continue round your body and fasten lower down at the front to enable you to wear clothes with low backs.

You can also buy bras with straps that can be crossed at the back, designed to not show when wearing tops with cut-away shoulders.

You may want to try going without a bra (see below).

## Not wearing a bra

If you prefer not to wear a bra, there are ways you can adjust your clothes to wear them with a prosthesis if you want to. Try things on first and see what works for you.

Some women:

- Pin a softie into other underwear such as a vest top or camisole
- Use a stick-on prosthesis with clothing that has good in-built support
- Wear pocketed clothing, available online and from some specialist shops (these clothes are usually designed to be worn with a silicone prosthesis)

## Sleepwear

If it helps you feel more confident or comfortable, you may want to wear a prosthesis in bed. You could consider:

- A ‘sleep bra’ or very soft, low-support bra with a softie
- Pocketed nightwear, available online and from some specialist suppliers
- A camisole or nightdress with a softie pinned in place

## SWIMWEAR

### High-street swimwear

If you want to wear a prosthesis when swimming, you can often find suitable swimwear in high-street shops.

The top needs to be cut high enough over the breast area and under the arms to cover the prosthesis. It also needs to have some structure, which is usually provided by cups. If you choose to wear a bikini top, choose one that comes in bra cup sizes, has a full cup and a supportive underband.

You could adapt a high-street swimsuit that has cups by making your own pocket to hold a prosthesis in place (see ‘Bra pockets’ on page 10). If you do this, you’ll probably need to wear a lightweight prosthesis or foam leisure prosthesis as other prostheses may be too heavy.

Although you can swim in a silicone or foam leisure prosthesis it’s important to rinse it well afterwards to avoid any possible damage from the chlorine or salt water.

You can also wear a swim prosthesis that doesn’t get damaged by salt water or chlorine (see ‘Swim prostheses’ on page 19).

### Post-surgery swimwear

You may prefer to wear pocketed post-surgery swimwear. This type of swimwear can be found in some high-street shops, large department stores or from specialist suppliers. They come in one-piece costumes, two-piece bikinis and tankinis. You can use a regular silicone prosthesis or a swim prosthesis in a post-surgery swimsuit.

You don't need to pay VAT on post-surgery swimwear if you have had breast cancer surgery (see the 'Financial help' section on page 11).

Made-to-measure swimwear is available from some companies. This allows you to choose the print and design for a swimsuit, tankini or bikini.

## FURTHER SUPPORT

Everyone has different feelings about their body and how they look after breast surgery. It's natural to have concerns. You may wonder how friends and family will react, or what people might say when you return to your everyday activities.

Simple measures can help you become more confident about your body and how you look. This might include having a suitable prosthesis fitted, choosing an attractive, well-fitting bra, or making some adjustments to your clothes.

Some areas have support groups, in person and online, where you can talk to other women and find out what has worked for them. Your breast care nurse will also be able to tell you about local support.

What's important is that you can make your own choices and find what's most comfortable and works best for you.

## Breast Cancer Now

Everyone affected by breast cancer can turn to us for support. Whoever you are, and whatever your experience of breast cancer, our free services are always here for you. The whole way through.

You can call our Helpline to speak to one of our specialist nurses or trained staff on **0808 800 6000**.

Our Someone Like Me service can put you in contact by phone or email with someone else who has been affected by breast cancer and who's been trained to help. You may want to speak to someone about having a prosthesis, getting fitted for a prosthesis or a bra or about 'going flat'.

We have a range of face-to-face and online support services for people at the end of primary breast cancer treatment, for people with secondary breast cancer and for women diagnosed at a younger age. Visit [breastcancernow.org/services](http://breastcancernow.org/services) or call the Helpline.

You can also chat to other people going through breast cancer on our online discussion Forum **forum.breastcancernow.org**

## USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND SUPPLIERS

Below are some suppliers of bras, prostheses, clothes and swimwear. Most are specifically for women who have had breast surgery.

Post-surgery bras are available from specialist suppliers or many high-street shops, which can often be a cheaper option.

**A fuller list that includes more general companies other woman who have had surgery have found useful is available on our website.**

Or you can call our Helpline on **0808 800 6000** to find out what may be available near you.

This is not a complete list and Breast Cancer Now can't guarantee the quality of the services or products provided by these companies. Your hospital may also sell specialist bras and swimsuits.

### **Asda (George at Asda)**

[direct.asda.com/george](http://direct.asda.com/george)

Products: post-surgery and non-wired bras, post-surgery swimwear and post-surgery pyjamas.

### **Amoena**

0345 434 7334

Website: [amoena.com/uk-en](http://amoena.com/uk-en)

Products: post-surgery bras, swimwear, sportswear and prostheses.

### **Boost**

0333 444 2951

[wewearboost.com](http://wewearboost.com)

Products: breast forms in a range of colours for women looking for alternatives to traditional prostheses.

**32** Call our Helpline on **0808 800 6000**

**The Bra Sisters**

[brasisters.co.uk](http://brasisters.co.uk)

Products: post-surgery bras, swimwear and prostheses.

**Eloise**

01908 340 094

[eloise.co.uk](http://eloise.co.uk)

Products: post-surgery bras, swimwear and prostheses.

**Knitted Knockers UK**

[knittedknockersuk.com](http://knittedknockersuk.com)

Products: provide free soft, lightweight knit prosthetics (including a version for water-based activities) made by volunteers.

**Marks and Spencer**

[marksandspencer.com](http://marksandspencer.com)

Products: post-surgery bras and non-wired bras, bra accessories and post-surgery swimwear. They also provide post-surgery bra fitting services both online and instore.

**Nicola Jane**

01243 537300

Website: [nicolajane.com](http://nicolajane.com)

Products: post-surgery bras, swimwear, nightwear, vest tops, prostheses, tie-ins and bra accessories.

**Primark**

Instore only

Products: post-surgery bras and non-wired bras.

**Skarlette Lingerie**

[theskarlette.co.uk](http://theskarlette.co.uk)

Products: bras and bra tops for smaller bra sizes and those who have had bilateral mastectomy.

**Silima**

01892 481620  
silima.co.uk

Products: post-surgery bras, prostheses, prosthetic nipples and bra inserts.

**Trulife**

0144 261 8100  
trulife.com

Products: post-surgery bras, prostheses and breast care accessories.

**Womanzone**

01925 220 932  
woman-zone.co.uk

Products: made-to-measure swimwear, post-surgery bras, vest tops, prostheses and bra accessories. Pocketing service available.

**With thanks to Amoena, Eloise and Boost for providing us with images for this booklet.**

## HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

Breast Cancer Now is a charity that relies on voluntary donations and gifts in wills. If you have found this information helpful, please visit [breastcancernow.org/give](http://breastcancernow.org/give) to support our vital care and research work.

# ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

**Breast prostheses, bras and clothes after breast surgery was written by Breast Cancer Now's clinical specialists, and reviewed by healthcare professionals and people affected by breast cancer.**



For a full list of the sources we used to research it:  
Email [health-info@breastcancernow.org](mailto:health-info@breastcancernow.org)



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We make every effort to ensure that our health information is accurate and up to date, but it doesn't replace the information and support from professionals in your healthcare team. So far as is permitted by law, Breast Cancer Now doesn't accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information included or referred to in it.

# BREAST CANCER NOW

The research & support charity

At Breast Cancer Now we're powered by our life-changing care. Our breast care nurses, expertly trained staff and volunteers, and award-winning information make sure anyone diagnosed with breast cancer can get the support they need to help them to live well with the physical and emotional impact of the disease.

We're here for anyone affected by breast cancer. And we always will be.

For breast cancer care, support and information, call us free on **0808 800 6000** or visit **breastcancernow.org**

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Patient Information Forum

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