



Home → Health Topics → Mastectomy

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/mastectomy.html>

## Mastectomy

### What is a mastectomy?

A mastectomy is surgery to remove part or all of the breast. It's usually done to treat **breast cancer** [<https://medlineplus.gov/breastcancer.html>] by removing the cancer. A mastectomy may be the first treatment option for some types of breast cancer or done after chemotherapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/cancerchemotherapy.html>] for other types. If you are at a very high risk for breast cancer, sometimes a mastectomy may be done to reduce your risk.

### What are the different types of mastectomies?

There are different types of mastectomies. Each differs in the amount of breast tissue and lymph nodes that are removed. Some types of breast surgery remove the breast skin and the nipple. Others may also remove nearby lymph nodes, which are part of your immune system [<https://medlineplus.gov/immunesystemanddisorders.html>] and help protect your body from infection and disease.

Which surgery you have depends on the stage of cancer, the size of the tumor, the size of the breast, and whether the lymph nodes are involved.

Types of breast surgery include:

- **Total (simple) mastectomy** is the removal of all the breast tissue and nipple of the breast that has cancer. Some lymph nodes under your arm may be removed and checked for cancer.
- **Modified radical mastectomy** is the removal of the breast that has cancer, including the nipple, areola (dark-colored skin around the nipple), skin over the breast, most of the lymph nodes under the arm, and often the lining over the chest muscles.
- **Lumpectomy** is breast-sparing surgery. The tumor and some normal breast tissue around it are removed, but not the breast itself. Some lymph nodes under your arm may be removed and checked for cancer. Part of the chest wall lining may also be removed if cancer is near it.

No matter which breast surgery you choose, you may also need other treatments. These could include **radiation therapy** [<https://medlineplus.gov/radiationtherapy.html>], chemotherapy, hormone therapy, or targeted therapy.

You may choose to have **breast reconstruction** [<https://medlineplus.gov/breastreconstruction.html>] to rebuild your breast at the same time as the mastectomy, or it may be done later. Your health care provider may suggest waiting if radiation therapy is part of your treatment plan.

*NIH: National Cancer Institute*

## Start Here

- **Breast Cancer Surgery** [<https://www.komen.org/wp-content/uploads/BreastCancerSurgery.pdf>] (Susan G. Komen for the Cure) - **PDF**
- **Mastectomy** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/mastectomy/about/pac-20394670?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/tests-procedures/mastectomy/about/pac-20394670?p=1>]

- Surgery Choices for Women with DCIS or Breast Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/surgery-choices>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/seno/opciones-de-cirugia>]
- Surgery for Breast Cancer [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/treatment/surgery-for-breast-cancer.html>] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-seno/tratamiento/cirugia-del-cancer-de-seno.html>]

## Living With

- Follow up Care After Breast Cancer Treatment [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/living-as-a-breast-cancer-survivor/follow-up-care-after-breast-cancer-treatment.html>] (American Cancer Society)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/tipos/cancer-de-seno/la-vida-como-una-sobreviviente-de-cancer-de-seno.html>]

## Specifics

- Deciding between Mastectomy or Lumpectomy [<https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/type/surgery/mastectomy-vs-lumpectomy/>] (Susan G. Komen for the Cure)
- Surgery to Reduce the Risk of Breast Cancer [<https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/risk-reducing-surgery-fact-sheet>]  (National Cancer Institute)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/tipos/seno/hoja-informativa-mastectomia-preventiva>]
- What You Need to Know about a Mastectomy [<https://www.komen.org/breast-cancer/treatment/type/surgery/mastectomy/>] (Susan G. Komen for the Cure)

## Images

- Breast lump removal - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100003\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100003_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100003\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100003_1.htm)]
- Mastectomy - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100031\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100031_1.htm)] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [[https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp\\_presentations/100031\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/esp_presentations/100031_1.htm)]

## Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Mastectomy [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=mastectomy&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: 7-step endoscopic nipple-sparing mastectomy with implant-based breast reconstruction: nipple sensation preservation... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40696408>]
- Article: First experience from 200 cases with a new breast tissue expander... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40674922>]
- Article: A protocol for three observational cohort studies evaluating adverse outcomes, excess... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40654126>]
- Mastectomy -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Mastectomy%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

## Find an Expert

- American Cancer Society [<https://www.cancer.org/>]
- National Cancer Institute [<https://www.cancer.gov/>]   
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol>]

# Patient Handouts

- Breast lump removal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002918.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002918.htm>]
- Mastectomy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002919.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002919.htm>]
- Mastectomy - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000244.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000244.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Breast lump removal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002918.htm>]

Breast lump removal - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100003\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100003_1.htm)]

Mastectomy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002919.htm>]

Mastectomy - discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000244.htm>]

Mastectomy - series [[https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100031\\_1.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/presentations/100031_1.htm)]

Mastectomy and breast reconstruction - what to ask your doctor  
[<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000253.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Breast Cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/breastcancer.html>]

Breast Reconstruction [<https://medlineplus.gov/breastreconstruction.html>]

Lymphedema [<https://medlineplus.gov/lymphedema.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Mastectomy* is the National Cancer Institute [<http://www.cancer.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our disclaimer [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our quality guidelines [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

Last updated May 2, 2025