

# Mad About Breast Implants

by Gayda L. Sayang-od

In a world where size does matter and bigger is better, breast size has evolved to symbolise a woman's sexual prowess, status, self-esteem and beauty. Breasts have been equated with a woman's self-worth. In interviews with Baguio\*-based men, 50 percent said they preferred big breasts, 45 percent said they preferred medium breasts, and only 5 percent said they preferred small breasts. The men who preferred big breasts said small breasts were unattractive, unappealing and posed no sexual challenge whatsoever, disregarding the biological fact that Asian women have smaller breasts compared with their Caucasian counterparts. These are notions about breasts that society has that drive some women to go under the knife. Others have breast enlargement procedures for fun, still others do it because they want to feel more attractive. Whatever the reason, it is still important to consider the consequences of having breast implants and how the procedure will be carried out.

## Breast Implants

There are two major kinds of breast implants. Silicone gel implants (although these have been banned) can be used under special circumstances such as if a woman has a failed saline implant, or has experienced complications from a saline implant. Silicone gel implants are also used for breast reconstruction or implant replacement.

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Saline implants are now the most common type of breast implants. These have one major advantage—if they should ever break, saline is basically salt and water, which will be harmlessly absorbed by the body.

## Risks

What are the risks involved? At the time of the procedure, complications can include bleeding and infection. Other risks include hardening of the breast due to scar tissue, leak or rupture, loss of sensation in the nipple or breast, shifting of the implant from its original position and interference with mammography reading that may hamper cancer detection.

Breast implants are irreversible procedures. During the procedure, the doctor may have to remove a small amount of original breast tissue in order to create a pocket for the new implant. Unfortunately, any removed tissue can never be put back, and if a woman wants to remove the implants, her breasts may be smaller than they originally were. Besides, the skin has also been stretched over time to accommodate the larger implant. If the implant is removed, the woman may end up with excess, saggy, droopy skin in her breasts. Breast implants generally wear out after 10 to 15 years.

## Other Drawbacks

Breast implants obviously entail costs and risks that women, preoccupied with breast size and implants, may not realise, including breast cancer.

Breast cancer kills around 3,000 women every year and is detected in around 8,000 new cases yearly. Women should protect themselves from breast cancer, especially if they are over 50 years old, have a history of breast cancer in the family, never had children or had children when they were over 30 years old. Breast cancers, when detected early and given prompt treatment, have excellent chances of treatment and cure. Medical professionals advise women to have regular check-ups and learn the art of breast self-examination (BSE). Learning how to examine one's breasts properly and doing regular BSE can help save one's life.

A woman's desire to be attractive to the opposite sex sometimes has dangerous consequences on her health. The ideals of men and society, which are reinforced by media and business, have been making Filipinas with small breasts feel unpretty and less of women.

Men and society should not control women's bodies by imposing infantile notions of beauty. Women, on the other hand, should be able to define their own ideals of beauty, on their terms. Not only should they happily accept themselves and what they have, but they should also be more health conscious. Women should begin loving themselves more and leave behind the inimical standards of society.

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\* Baguio is the capital of Benguet, a province in the northern part of the Philippines.

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