

Information for Patients

Surgery to reduce the size of your breasts is a procedure which should only be carried out when specific criteria are met. This is because the medical evidence tells us that the operation can sometimes do more harm than good, especially if you are overweight or if you smoke and there are other treatments which can be more effective.

About the condition

Large breasts can cause several problems for women. They can affect daily living and prevent an active lifestyle. Many patients report pain in their back, neck and shoulders. Some patients may get a rash or infection under their breast tissue. Having large breasts may mean it's difficult to find clothes that fit and are comfortable.

It's important you and your doctor make a shared decision about what's best for you if your breasts are so large they are causing you problems. When making that decision you should both consider the benefits, the risks, the alternatives and what will happen if you do nothing.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

Breast reduction surgery may improve your mobility and make everyday activities easier, but it can only be carried out in specific circumstances and when other options have been tried and shown not to work.

What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

Breast reduction surgery is a major operation. There is a risk of complications which can include, bleeding, infection, significant scarring, loss of the nipple, alteration to nipple sensation and problems with breast feeding. A cup size cannot be guaranteed. These risks are greater in smokers and patients who are overweight.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

There are lots of alternatives you should try first. These include losing weight, having a professionally fitted bra, pain relief, physiotherapy or seeking psychological support.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

Doing nothing is not likely to be harmful and you should try the alternatives to surgery first.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.