



KATARZYNA MACKENZIE

PLASTIC SURGEON

Gynecomastia Surgery (Male Breast Surgery)

Men are increasingly requesting aesthetic surgery designed to make them look fitter, more 'masculine' or to maintain a youthful appearance.

Gynaecomastia is a term meaning male breast enlargement. It is quite a common condition requests for treatment are invariably driven by self-consciousness combined with an inability to get rid of unwanted excess breast tissue when all other fitness goals have been achieved.

The goal of gynecomastia treatment is to reduce breast size in men who are embarrassed by overly large breasts. Reduction methods include liposuction, cutting out excess glandular tissue or using a combination of liposuction and excision.

Length of surgery	2 hours
Anaesthesia	General anaesthetic
Hospital stay	1 night
Risks/complications of surgery	Frequent: Bruising, swelling, temporary numbness, change in nipple sensation Infrequent: Infection, bleeding (haematoma), delayed wound healing, asymmetry, skin necrosis, permanent numbness, poor scarring, seroma, fat necrosis
Recovery	5-10 days until socialising with close friends and family 2 weeks until return to work and normal social engagements 2 weeks compression garment 3-4 weeks until swelling and bruising disappears 4 weeks pressure garment 4 weeks reduced lower limb movement 8-10 weeks until return to gym and other strenuous activities 6-9 months until final result
Driving	2 weeks
Follow up	1 week, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months
Duration of results	Permanent unless followed by weight gain

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Gynecomastia surgery information sheet

Any plastic surgery procedure is a very personal choice and understandably there are a number of questions that arise. This information sheet is a general guide for patients considering gynecomastia surgery under the care of Dr Mackenzie. It should provide the answers to some questions that you may have. There are many factors that can affect your individual operation, your recovery and the long-term result. Some of these factors include your overall health, previous surgery, any bleeding tendencies that you have and your healing capabilities, some of which will be affected by smoking, alcohol and various medications. Such issues that are specific to you need to be discussed with Dr Mackenzie and are not covered here. Please feel free to ask her any further questions before you sign the consent form.

Introduction

A male breast reduction is the most effective known treatment for gynecomastia, or enlarged male breasts. This cosmetic surgery procedure removes excess fat and glandular tissue to restore a flatter, firmer and more masculine contour to the chest.

Due to genetics, use of certain medications, or other unspecified reasons, some men develop the appearance of enlarged breasts. 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. There is usually no underlying medical problem, and this should be considered normal for some men. However, before going ahead with any treatment or surgery it is important to see your family doctor, as gynecomastia can be due to problems with weight, hormone disorders or imbalance, some medications (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).

There are many different surgical treatments for gynecomastia, which include liposuction, cutting out excess glandular tissue or using a combination of liposuction and excision.

What is gynecomastia?

Gynecomastia is a condition that affects men of all ages, right from teens to late 60's. It is the result of accumulation of fat in the male breast and also of the enlargement of the breast disc.

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Who is a good candidate for gynecomastia surgery?

Gynecomastia surgery an individualized procedure and may not be suitable for everyone. The following are common reasons why you may want to consider this procedure:

- Your breast enlargement that cannot be corrected through alternative medical treatments, weight loss and exercise
- You want your chest to have a better, more proportional contour and a firmer look and feel
- You are unhappy with the size or appearance of your breasts
- You experience physical discomfort because of your breasts
- You have good skin elasticity. Successful gynecomastia surgery involves adequate skin contraction after your excess skin is surgically removed. Your skin may lack the necessary elasticity for good contraction if you are age fifty or older, have significant sun damage, have breasts with a lot of stretch marks or have undergone gastric bypass surgery
- You do not use marijuana, steroids or drink alcoholic beverages excessively (it is theorized that these substances may cause gynecomastia)

Gynecomastia surgery may be a good option for you if:

- You do not smoke as smoking slows down the healing process and increases the risk of serious complications during and after surgery
- You a positive outlook, realistic expectations and specific goals in mind for improving the physical symptoms of gynecomastia
- Your weight is stable. Slender individuals with extra fat are the best candidates; if you are generally obese, this procedure is not appropriate for you
- You are physically healthy. You must be in relatively good physical shape to tolerate this procedure
- Your breast development has stabilized
- You have succeeded in a weight reduction program and you now desire shapely thighs that reflect your more proportional, toned figure
- Adolescents may benefit from surgery, although secondary procedures may be needed in the future should breast development continue

Please note, that gynecomastia surgery is not intended strictly for the removal of excess fat. Liposuction alone can remove excess fat deposits where skin has good elasticity and is able to naturally conform to new chest contours. In cases where skin elasticity is poor, a combination of liposuction and glandular tissue and skin excision may be recommended.

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Are there any reasons for a patient to not have gynecomastia surgery?

Patients who are actively smoking or on blood thinning medication such as aspirin and warfarin are at a high risk of complications such as bleeding or wound infections and delayed wound healing. It is advisable to not consume nicotine in any form for six weeks before thigh lift and a similar time after. Medication such as aspirin or warfarin may need to be stopped (if this is not for an essential or life-threatening condition) at the appropriate time before surgery. This should be discussed with Dr Mackenzie or GP.

Importantly, potential causes of gynaecomastia as discussed above must be out ruled by your GP before going ahead with surgical treatment.

What are the limitations of gynecomastia?

- If significant glandular tissue or extra skin is present, it will not be possible to reduce this tissue via liposuction alone. There will be some external scars usually around the nipple area
- If a large amount of extra skin is present, more extensive incisions may be necessary to reduce the skin and breast tissue sufficiently. If this scar on the chest is an issue for you, then you should not have gynecomastia surgery
- Significant changes in weight can affect the long term results of gynecomastia surgery. Therefore, if you are considering gynecomastia surgery it is best to be at a stable weight with no further changes in weight planned before undergoing the surgery

What to expect from gynecomastia surgery consultation?

You would normally meet Dr Mackenzie for at least two pre-operative consultations. The first of which is mainly about assessment and the formulation of an operative plan specific to your gynecomastia. Dr Mackenzie usually summarises this consultation in a letter to you and if you decide to move forward towards surgery, a second consultation is scheduled to go over things once more and discuss the possible complications in more detail. It is usual for Dr Mackenzie to write to your GP but often patients do not want this, in which case no communication is made.

During your gynecomastia surgery consultation Dr Mackenzie will discuss:

- Your surgical goals
- What outcome do you expect from the surgery? What is your chief motivation in undergoing gynecomastia surgery?
- Your complete medical history, social history, drug allergies
- Your previous surgery

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- Your current prescription medications, including vitamins, herbal supplements, alcohol, tobacco and drug use. Make sure to tell your doctor about any herbal supplements you take, as some of them may cause bleeding problems

Dr Mackenzie will also:

- Evaluate your general health status and any risk factors
- Discuss your options
- Ask you to look in a mirror and point out exactly what you would like to see improved
- Examine your chest including measurements
- Evaluate elasticity of the skin
- Discuss the scarring and make sure you understand the amount of scarring to be expected
- Take the photographs
- Discuss your ideal weight, realistic weight and current weight and possibly suggest a weight loss program before surgery
- Discuss your expectations with you. An honest discussion will help determine a satisfactory outcome
- Recommend a course of treatment
- Discuss likely outcomes of gynecomastia surgery and any potential complications
- 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
- Potential causes of gynaecomastia as discussed above must be out ruled by your GP before going ahead with surgical treatment, therefore blood test and other investigations may be requested for review at the consultation
- Blood tests, a heart trace (ECG) and a chest X-ray may need to be organised

At your initial consultation, Dr Mackenzie will recommend the exact nature of your proposed treatment, including procedure details, recovery times and any possible side-effects. You should then have a cooling-off period before booking surgery and meeting Dr Mackenzie again for a second consultation. At that second consultation, she will go over the risks and complications in more detail with you. There will also be some more specific points to discuss about the practicalities of the procedure, which are summarised below.

Preparation for surgery

It is important to avoid taking any Aspirin or products containing Aspirin for 2 weeks either side of the operation since Aspirin has an adverse effect on bruising as it thins the blood. The same is true for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as Brufen, Nurofen and Voltaren) and vitamin E tablets. You may also be asked to stop taking naturopathic substances such as garlic, ginko, ginseng and St John's Wort as they may affect clotting and anaesthesia. Always tell your surgeon EVERYTHING you are taking.

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Some patients find homeopathic remedies such as arnica helpful to reduce bruising although it is very difficult to “prove” their efficacy scientifically. If you wish to use arnica you should begin 2-3 days before the operation and continue for a week afterward.

If you are a smoker it is absolutely imperative that you to stop for 6 weeks before surgery and for 6 weeks afterwards so as not to restrict the circulation to the skin. This restriction applies to all forms of nicotine including patches, inhalers and nicotine chewing gum!

For the best results of gynecomastia surgery, it is optimal if you have a body mass index (BMI) as close to normal (25) as possible.

Surgery requiring general anaesthesia is most safely conducted when patients are fit and healthy. General anaesthetic is unwise in patients who are unwell with viral illness or colds.

On the night before surgery we would ask that you eat well, and remain well hydrated. In most cases you will be asked to come to the hospital at 7:00am on the morning of surgery, having had nothing to eat from midnight. Clear water can be drunk up to 2 hours before surgery and tea without milk or coffee without milk can also be taken. Milk is considered to be solid food and cannot be taken within 6 hours of the start of surgery.

On the morning of surgery, you will be admitted to the ward. You will meet the anaesthetist who will discuss the anaesthetic with you in detail and you will also see Dr Mackenzie who will mark the surgical site as required and complete the consent form for surgery with you.

While making preparations, be sure to arrange for someone to drive you home after your surgery and to help you out for a few days at home.

What is involved in the operation?

The goal of gynecomastia surgery is to restore a normal male breast contour and to correct deformities of the breast, nipple or areola. Surgical options include liposuction, excision (surgical removal of tissue) or a combination of both approaches. Glandular breast tissue is denser than fatty tissue and is not appropriate for liposuction.

Gynecomastia surgery is carried out under general anaesthesia. It usually requires one night stay in hospital after surgery.

The choice of surgical technique depends on the likelihood of skin redundancy after surgery. You need to remember that skin shrinkage is greater in younger than older patients.

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Dr Mackenzie will create markings on your chest. The location, length and direction of these incision markings will be dictated by the type of gynecomastia surgery you will undergo.

If Dr Mackenzie feels that you have very good quality of skin and the problem is relatively too much fatty tissue present only, then liposuction alone may be useful. This is usually carried out under general anaesthetic and involves tiny incisions, where fluid is infiltrated and then a suction cannula is used to remove the fat. A suction cannula is attached to a suction pump which is inserted through the very small skin incisions and used to remove the unwanted fat. Liposuction has the advantage of using very small scars and of being very effective in removing subcutaneous tissue. It does rely somewhat on the ability of the skin to snap back. Please refer to liposuction information sheet.

If excess glandular tissue is present, it may need to be excised. This will leave a scar, usually under the areolar edge. This excision can be performed alone or in conjunction with liposuction. Liposuction effectively removes the fatty tissue present, while the more fibrous tissue is removed via an incision under the nipple. This can reduce the amount of open surgery needed and contour the rest of the chest nicely.

When the breast tissue is more solid and fibrous or there is a significant amount of extra skin, open surgery is necessary. Liposuction alone will not sufficiently remove this tissue. An incision is placed just underneath the nipple or towards the side under the armpit and the excess tissue is removed. This will leave a scar in the area, which will be red at first and will slowly fade. In severe cases a more extensive scar may be needed to remove sufficient skin and tighten the area. Major reductions that involve the removal of a significant amount of tissue and skin may require larger incisions that result in more obvious scars. If necessary, the size of the areola (pigmented area of skin around the nipple) is reduced as well. In severe cases, the nipple may need to be moved and repositioned in to a better location on the chest.

Dr Mackenzie will close the incisions carefully to minimize scarring. Your sutures may be placed beneath the skin, where they will be gradually absorbed by your body.

Haemostatic net may be used.

Surgical drains are sometimes used to drain any excess fluid. If drains are used, they will normally come out the day after the operation.

Surgical dressings are applied and compression garments are placed on the area which will need to be worn for several weeks following surgery to retain the shape and reduce swelling.

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Where will the scars be?

Gynecomastia surgery scars vary depending on the amount of excess tissue you have and the elasticity of your skin. Scars usually fade and soften over a period of one year, however they will never disappear. They can become raised and itchy after surgery. Despite the possibility of problematic scars, the overwhelming majority of patients scar well and are extremely happy with the changes that have been achieved.

If you have small breasts that are only fat, then your scars will be small (just large enough to admit a liposuction cannula). Most liposuction scars fade and are barely visible over time.

With firm breast tissue, there is usually a scar under the areola.

If you have large female-like breasts, then the scars may extend across each side of your chest, but your surgeon will attempt to hide them in a crease.

If the areolas are large and need reduction also, then the scar goes all the way around the areola.

What can you expect after gynecomastia surgery?

It is vitally important that you follow all postoperative instructions provided by Dr Mackenzie. Your surgeon will also provide detailed instructions about the normal symptoms you will experience and any potential signs of complications. It is important to realize that the amount of time it takes for recovery varies greatly among individuals.

You may expect the following immediately after the procedure:

- Bruising and swelling are normal after swelling and may last for a week or more. Hardness or lumpiness within the tissues due to swelling can persist for a month or longer
- To prevent coughing and bleeding, do not smoke after your procedure. Do not drink alcohol for five days after surgery or while you are taking pain medication
- Following the surgery, you can be confident that your breast tissue will not grow back, however the swelling caused by your procedure may take as much as six to nine months to settle
- You will have small scars in the areas the suction cannulae have been inserted if liposuction was used and you often have some temporary numbness of the overlying skin. Some fluid may ooze from these areas in the beginning
- If having open surgery, a surgical drain will have been placed on each side of the chest and will remain in place for 24 hours.
- You need to keep wounds completely dry for the first 48 hours. Then you may shower over the tapes but they need to dry or be dried (with a hairdryer on a cool setting) before dressing again

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- Mild to moderate discomfort is common and can usually be controlled by taking pain killing tablets such as Paracetamol as required. Aspirin and certain anti-inflammatory medications must be avoided because it can promote bleeding
- You will wear an elastic compression garment to reduce swelling and provide support to the skin as it tightens. You will wear this garment for 6 weeks day and night

Recovery from gynecomastia surgery occurs over a period of few months. After several months, you can start evaluating the aesthetic outcome of your surgery. It is important to remember that the time it takes to recover varies greatly among individuals.

- Most people are able to return to work, which does not involve heavy manual labour in approximately two weeks. It may take up to four weeks for certain individuals to be able to resume normal activities at work and for leisure
- You may resume driving after the first two to three weeks, when these activities do not cause pain and you can perform emergency stooping
- Avoid heavy lifting and jogging for six to eight weeks
- Plan to take about two weeks off from work, depending on the physical demands of your job
- At the end of 4-6 weeks patients are expected to be able to return to normal lifestyle including gym and sport
- Like all surgeries, gynecomastia surgery carries some risk, however they are small and infrequent. To prevent blood clotting problems, you will wear anti-embolism (TED) stockings before, during and after your surgery for 4 weeks and will be encouraged to get up and move about as soon as possible
- Scars from gynecomastia usually take many months, or even a year to settle. In the period immediately following your surgery, these scars may be firm, red, raised, lumpy and itchy due to a build-up of excess scar tissue. As your skin strength returns and the scars mature, they will become softer, flatter and more natural in colour and texture. This process usually takes about 18 months and can be helped by daily massage with moisturizing cream
- Call your surgeon immediately if you notice an increase in swelling, pain, redness, drainage, or bleeding in the surgical area, or if you develop fever, dizziness, nausea, or vomiting. Other red flags include shortness of breath, chest pains, and an unusual heartbeat

How long does the effect of gynecomastia surgery last?

The results of gynecomastia surgery will be long-lasting, provided that you maintain a stable weight and general fitness. Gynecomastia surgery will not prevent the effects of aging. It is natural to lose some firmness, but most of your improvement should be relatively permanent.

If you gain considerable weight after the surgery and then lose the weight, loose skin will return.

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It is important to be aware that small revisions or adjustments are often needed after the main procedure to get the optimum result.

What are the complications of gynecomastia surgery?

In general, gynecomastia surgery is safe, and the results are entirely predictable, with an associated high degree of patient satisfaction. Nevertheless, no surgery is without risk.

All general anaesthetics carry risks such as deep vein thrombosis and chest infection but with modern anaesthetic techniques, these are minimised.

Early complications

- Bleeding which can lead to a collection of blood (a haematoma) that needs to be drained in theatre. This is likely to be a concern in the first few days after surgery
- Infection- you are given a dose of antibiotics at the beginning of the operation. Further antibiotics are not routinely given, because this leads to antibiotic resistance. The signs of infection are increased redness, discharge from the wound, fevers or feeling unwell. If your wound gets infected, more antibiotics will be required, and sometimes admission to hospital or an operation may be needed to resolve it
- Pain- usually not severe and you can manage it by oral pain relief
- Swelling and bruising. This will peak around day 3 to 4 after surgery and will gradually reduce after that. Most of the swelling is usually gone by 6 weeks but occasionally lasts longer than expected
- Delayed wound healing- sometimes wounds take longer than expected to heal. It may be because of one of the other problems mentioned above e.g. infection or due to overdoing it after surgery. This can usually be managed with wound care in the clinic
- Problems with nipple healing. If there is extensive surgery around or under the nipple or if the nipple has to be moved and repositioned on the chest, this carries a risk of problems with the blood supply to the nipple
- Seroma (fluid collection within the wound after the drains have been removed)- after surgery, the body naturally produces a certain amount of fluid as part of its reaction to surgery and attempts to heal the area. It may need to be drained using a little needle
- Fat necrosis-fat has a poor blood supply may result in a discharge from the surgical wounds or palpable lumps

Late complications

- Over correction to the chest can become apparent once the swelling resolves. This is sometimes a difficult problem to resolve and may involve transferring fat to the area to build up the chest and correct the contour defect

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- Under correction where less tissue than desired has been removed and sometimes a second procedure is required to remove further tissue
- Change in nipple sensation. Numbness is more common but sometimes nipples can be over sensitive following surgery in the area
- Numbness or hypersensitivity of the overlying skin due to bruising or damage to the small nerves of the skin. This is usually temporary but may persist
- Visible and prominent scars such as keloids and hypertrophic scars. These scars are raised, red and thickened, and may form over healed incisions. They may be itchy, annoying and unsightly but are not a threat to health. These scars may restrict the clothing you can wear
- Contour irregularities and asymmetry. A perfect result will never occur, and one can always find shortcomings with any cosmetic surgery operation
- Sutures may not absorb, but spontaneously surface through the skin, causing irritation, drainage and redness
- Occasionally, there is a need to undertake adjustment or revision surgery at a later date to correct an uneven result or an uneven scar. If needed, this can usually be performed under local anaesthetic as an outpatient procedure

Sometimes after undergoing a gynaecomastia procedure, patients are disappointed with the result. This may be due to one of the problems described above occurring or due to unrealistic expectations of the surgery e.g. mild asymmetries, visible scars or some residual breast tissue. It is important that you discuss your expectations in advance of the surgery so that you can understand what to expect from the surgery and so this situation is avoided as much as possible. Additional costs may be incurred for further procedures.