

LYMPHEDEMA THERAPY SOURCE

Precautions after Breast Reconstruction

After breast reconstruction with silicone implants, precautions are generally required for at least 4 to 6 weeks. Some restrictions may extend up to 3 months or more, depending on how the individual heals and whether there are complications. Follow your surgeon's protocol. Following are general guidelines.

Immediately After Surgery (Weeks 0–2):

- Do not lift anything heavier than 5 to 10 pounds (for example, a gallon of milk).
- Limit movement of the arm on the side of surgery to avoid straining the chest muscles, the implant pocket, or any surgical drains.
- Keep surgical dressings clean and dry.
- If drains were placed, monitor and record output and be alert for signs of infection such as increased redness, swelling, or fever.

Weeks 2–6:

- Gradual reintroduction of arm movement is usually allowed, often starting around week 2 with gentle range-of-motion exercises.
- Continue to avoid lifting, pushing, or pulling heavy items.
- Refrain from strenuous upper body activity, including any exercises that involve chest muscle use such as pushups or weightlifting.
- Do not wear underwire or tight bras; instead, wear a surgical or soft support bra as instructed.

After 6 Weeks (if cleared by your surgeon):

- Many patients can return to light exercise, driving, and most normal daily activities.
- Upper body workouts may still be restricted until 8 to 12 weeks post-surgery, depending on healing.
- If incisions are fully healed, scar massage or desensitization exercises may begin.

Bras

After breast implants—whether for reconstruction or augmentation—it's important to avoid excessive pressure on the breasts, especially during the healing period. When it comes to how tight is "too tight" for a bra, here's a clinical and practical breakdown:

Why Bra Tightness Matters

- Tight bras can compress the implants and healing tissue.
- Compression may affect implant positioning, increase swelling, or interfere with wound healing.
- Especially in the first 6–12 weeks post-op, the capsule forming around the implant is still soft and moldable.

How Tight is Too Tight?

A bra is too tight if:

- It leaves deep red marks on the skin that last more than a few minutes.
- The band or cups dig into the skin or tissue.
- It causes discomfort, pain, or worsens swelling.
- It restricts breathing or chest movement.
- It feels compressive over the implant site, not just supportive under the bust.

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Specialists in swelling, compression fitting and lymphedema education.

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Recommended Bra Fit After Implants

- Supportive, not compressive: A snug but gentle hold is key.
- Wide band and straps: To distribute weight without digging.
- No underwire: Especially during healing, as wires can press on incisions or implant edges.
- Front-closure (often recommended by surgeons): Easier to manage post-op.
- Post-surgical bras: Often prescribed or recommended, these are specifically designed for recovery.

Timing Considerations

- 0–6 weeks: Most surgeons recommend wearing a surgical or soft support bra 24/7 (except bathing).
- 6–12 weeks: Transition to non-wired bras; avoid high compression sports bras unless directed.
- After 12 weeks: Some women may return to wired or regular bras if cleared by their surgeon.

Nighttime

Wearing a bra at night after breast implants—especially for reconstruction—depends on the stage of healing and the surgeon’s specific protocol. However, general guidelines are as follows:

Early Post-Op (0–6 weeks): *Wear a bra at night*

- Most surgeons recommend 24/7 bra wear, including during sleep, to support implant positioning and minimize swelling.
- The goal is to stabilize the implants as the capsule forms around them.
- A surgical or soft, supportive bra (no underwire) is ideal.

Intermediate Healing (6–12 weeks): *Depends on surgeon instructions and patient comfort*

- Some surgeons may allow short periods without a bra, but many still recommend wearing one at night.
- Night use continues to prevent implant shifting, minimize strain, and maintain shape—especially for larger implants or reconstruction after mastectomy.

Long-Term (after 12 weeks): *Optional—but often recommended*

- Wearing a bra at night isn’t mandatory, but many women choose to:
 - Prevent implant sagging over time
 - Reduce discomfort from movement during sleep
 - Maintain support, especially for larger cup sizes

If you’re unsure, wearing a supportive sleep bra (e.g., cotton or post-surgical bra) is generally safe and may improve comfort and outcomes. Any bra should be soft, wireless and non-restrictive at night. Avoid tight compression or underwire while sleeping. And always defer to your surgeon’s guidance as they tailor recommendations to the surgical technique and your specific healing progress.