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## 8 Breast Health Myths Doctors Say You Need to Stop Believing

Allie Hogan | August 5, 2024



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Breasts tend to be a topic of conversation, and with that, there's been a lot of misinformation spread about breast health, wellness and surgery. We asked experts to clear up the most common myths they hear about breast health to set the record straight.

### Featured experts

- George Sanders, MD is a board-certified plastic surgeon based in Encino, CA
- **Dhivya Srinivasa**, MD is a board-certified plastic surgeon based in Santa Monica, CA

### Myth: Dense breast tissue means you have breast cancer

The reality of this myth is complicated as sometimes dense breast tissue can be an indication of cancer, so it's essential to get checked and get to the bottom of it with a board-certified doctor. However, if your mammogram shows dense breast tissue, you don't need to automatically assume the worst.

"Dense tissue is a diagnosis that comes from imaging such as a mammogram. It essentially means your breasts have more densely packed breast tissue and less fatty tissue," explains Santa Monica, CA plastic surgeon Dhivya Srinivasa, MD. "It is the breast tissue that can become cancerous, so it is important that we image it properly. We know that dense breast tissue can hide breast cancer

on mammograms, as it is harder to detect new tumors in dense breasts on mammograms.” She urges women with dense breast tissue to request additional imaging such as ultrasound or MRI.

### **Myth: Wearing a bra prevents breasts from sagging**

Dr. Srinivasa says while this myth might have some relevance to it, it’s not the end all be all that people make it out to be. “In general, supporting your breast tissue releases pressure from the skin and can minimize skin stretch over time,” she explains. “That said, you could wear an underwire bra 100 percent of the time, and your breasts will still develop some sag over time. This is because of genetics and gravity. Everyone has a variation to their skin stretch, so genetics play a big role.”

“Another important factor is the size of your breasts. The larger your breasts are, the more weight that pulls down on the skin,” says Dr. Srinivasa. “Whether you like to wear a bra or not, I don’t recommend doing it solely for the purposes of preventing ‘ptosis’ or sagging of the breasts. Likely, genetics, which you have no control over, play a much bigger role than bra practices.”

### **Myth: Breast implants need to be replaced every 10 years**

“We often hear that breast implants should be replaced every 10 years. The truth is that unless there is a problem, no exchange is necessary,” says Encino, CA plastic surgeon George Sanders, MD. He notes that leakage or capsular contracture are reasons that mandate implant exchange.

“Other patients may prefer a change in size, a change in what the implant is filled with, a change in shape, or perhaps they are undergoing a breast lift and want to take advantage of the surgical opportunity to replace an older implant before it leaks,” says Dr. Sander. “The FDA recommendation is for an MRI or ultrasound every few years after insertion of silicone implants to check for a leak. This ultrasound can usually be conveniently done at the same time as a mammogram.”

### **Myth: Breast pain equals cancer**

Breast pain can be alarming, but the experts say you don’t need to panic. “Breast pain is most often a benign finding, meaning that there is no cancer. In fact, most breast cancers are painless,” says Dr. Srinivasa. “That said, it is important to find out *why* you have breast pain. There are many non-cancerous causes that can be hormonal in nature.”

Dr. Srinivasa notes that benign masses such as a cyst or a fibroadenoma can cause pain. “Although these are not cancerous, you still want to have them evaluated by a breast surgeon and followed over time to make sure they do not grow or change.”

### **Myth: You can’t breastfeed after a breast reduction**

Dr. Srinivasa says you can absolutely still breastfeed post-augmentation. “There are a lot of women suffering from back and neck pain due to large breasts who are afraid to have surgery because of misconceptions about breastfeeding. Rest assured, you can still breastfeed after a breast reduction.”

### **Myth: Older women are not good candidates for breast augmentation**

Dr. Sanders says this myth “flies in the face of the reality that many older women have breast implant surgery.” He notes that it’s oftentimes to exchange implants or remove them because of increasing breast size. “In other cases, however, first time augmentation is enthusiastically pursued. If the person’s overall health is good and expectations are realistic, the results can be most gratifying.”

### **Myth: Breast implants are the only way to get bigger breasts**

Dr. Srinivasa points to a handful of other techniques that can augment a breast without the use of implants. “These range from fat grafting (where we perform liposuction and transfer fat to the breasts) to microsurgery procedures where we can transplant large amounts of fat from other parts of your body,” she explains.

### **Myth: You need an implant to get a breast lift**

An implant is actually not necessary for a breast lift. “A breast lift essentially ‘re-seams’ the skin such that the tissue you already have is lifted and made perkier. A breast lift allows for more cleavage, better fullness in the upper part of the breast, and improved nipple position.”

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