

Big Breasts Can Be an Even Bigger Pain Requiring Surgical Relief

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Contrary to pop-culture portrayals, big breasts aren't always an asset; for some women, they can be a literal pain in the neck.

According to the American Society for Plastic Surgeons, disproportionately large breasts and the frustrations that come with them cause more than 88,000 women to seek breast reduction surgery each year.

UC Health reconstructive [plastic surgeon](#) Minh-Doan Nguyen, MD, PhD, says the majority of women who choose breast reduction do so for two reasons: the inability to be physically active and experiencing chronic pain in the neck, shoulders and back resulting from the breast weight strain.

“Many women get grooves on their shoulders from constantly tightening their bra straps to achieve more support,” explains Nguyen, who is also on faculty at the UC College of Medicine. “In addition, women have the added challenge of keeping the area under their breast clean and dry to avoid getting painful rashes and infections.”

Obesity can play a role in breast size, but Nguyen says the choice to get reduction surgery comes down to how large the breasts are in proportion to the rest of a woman's body.

“Women who are larger in stature typically have large breasts, but in terms of volume they aren't disproportional to the rest of their bodies,”

says Nguyen. “For women that are larger, so many tell me: ‘I can’t find a bra to support my breasts, so I can’t even attempt to go out and do any type of vigorous activity to lose weight.’ That’s a big quality of life issue that I can help them overcome.”

Surgery is the most extreme treatment choice and only certain patients will qualify for it. Patients are encouraged to explore other options to eradicate pain—such as treatment with primary care physician, physical therapist or chiropractor—before choosing the surgery route.

If the patient is a good candidate for surgery, the surgeon will first mark the patient’s breasts to guide tissue removal. The amount of tissue that is removed is based on individualized calculations related to the patient’s body mass index, weight and height. The techniques used for breast reduction surgery vary, but the goal is the same: to preserve the nipple and remove enough glandular tissue, fat tissue and skin to relieve the patient’s pain and create breast conformity.

“By the time women ask about breast reduction, they are so tired of dealing with the symptoms that they just want relief. The perky breasts are a side benefit—not the motivating factor,” adds Nguyen. “It’s tough for these women to find bras and shirts that fit properly from standard consumer stores. Many women are self-conscious about their breasts and don’t want to accentuate them.”

Nguyen notes that while breast reduction surgery is often a permanent solution in terms of tissue volume, patients should realize that their breasts will still change with age—particularly if they lose or gain a substantial amount of weight. Patients who have surgery during their teens or 20s when the breasts are not fully developed may require an additional surgery. Breast reduction can also affect a woman’s ability to breastfeed.

Provided by University of Cincinnati ([news](#) : [web](#))

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