

Dutch urge removal of faulty PIP breast implants

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Dutch health authorities on Wednesday recommended the removal of breast implants made by now-defunct French company PIP after conflicting reports about the product's safety.

"If it is torn, the implant must be removed. Even if there is no tear shown... it is recommended that the implant be removed," the Dutch health watchdog and the Dutch Association of Plastic Surgeons said in a statement.

The joint recommendations by the association and the Dutch health authority inspectorate were made in the light of "uncertainties in diverse publications" over the issue affecting around 1,000 women in the Netherlands.

About 300,000 women in 65 countries are estimated to have received implants made by Poly Implant Prothese (PIP), which allegedly used an illegal industrial-grade gel rather than medical quality silicone.

Investigators say the unauthorised gel has led to abnormally high rates of ruptured or leaking implants and more than a dozen countries in Europe and Latin America have urged women to have checkups.

Dutch health authorities said last month that women with PIP implants, sold locally under the name "M-Implants", should consult their doctors or seek medical advice at clinics.

PIP's products were banned in the Netherlands in early 2010 and in September that year it was first recommended that women with the implants see their physicians.

But "ultimately it's the woman's choice whether to wear the prostheses in consultation with a doctors or to remove them," Dutch health authority inspectorate spokeswoman Diane Bouhuijs told AFP.

Around 84 percent of breast implants made in France by PIP, which went into liquidation in March 2010, were exported to Latin America, Spain and Britain.

In France, 20 women with the implants have been diagnosed with cancer, 16 of them with breast cancer, although there is no indication that the implants caused the disease.

France's health ministry last month advised 30,000 women with the PIP implants to have them removed.

Germany, where according to press reports some 7,500 women were affected, has also recommended the removal of defective breast implants.

Despite around 40,000 British women wearing the prostheses, London has so far said breast implant removals would not be justified.

About 1,000 women from South America plan to sue PIP over the implants, their lawyer said Tuesday.

Lawyer Arie Alimi said about 500 Argentinian women and an equal number from Venezuela were planning to be civil plaintiffs in the probe by French police into PIP and its founder Jean-Claude Mas.

Mas, 72, said last week that much of the information emerging in the scandal was untrue but refused further comment.

In a statement he denounced the "impressive number of untruths" over the affair said he would refrain from making other public comments because of a judicial investigation.

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