

Germans, Czechs warn on French breasts implants

January 6 2012

Germany and the Czech Republic advised women Friday to have potentially faulty breast implants made by French firm PIP removed, but Britain said it was not convinced of the need.

Germany's Federal Institute for Medications and [Medical Products](#) (BfArM) recommended that implants made by the firm at the heart of the scandal should be removed "as a precautionary measure".

The Czech [health ministry](#) gave similar advice to up to 2,000 women there.

And while Britain said there was no evidence requiring a general recommendation to remove the implants of some 40,000 women, it said those who had received them from the state-run [National Health Service](#) could have the prostheses removed free of charge.

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 that [investigators](#) say has led to abnormally high rates of ruptured implants.

Some estimates of the number of women affected are higher.

France has already advised the removal of the PIP implants, while 13 other countries in Europe and in [Latin America](#) have urged women to get regular checkups.

Two of them of them -- Bolivia and Venezuela -- are offering operations to have the [prostheses](#) removed.

Australia, however, has said it found no evidence that the implants posed a risk.

French police are investigating the now-defunct PIP and its founder Jean-Claude Mas, 72.

According to the minutes of a police interview conducted in October and seen by AFP, Mas admitted to investigators that he switched the gel and hoodwinked quality inspectors in order to boost profits.

The scandal has led to more than 450 lawsuits filed in three countries.

Germany's BfArM said it was revising advice issued on December 23 that women should ask their doctors to check whether the implants had developed tears before deciding if further action was necessary.

"Due to the rising number of notices from doctors, trade organisations and hospitals in recent days, the BfArM has expanded its risk assessment," the institute said.

"These notices say that silicone from such implants increasingly and over time can leak, even in those without tears."

The German government has not said how many women have received the implants, but reported 19 incidents of leaking.

The Czech health ministry said its experts had not yet detected any "acute risk of serious health problems."

But in a message on its website it said: "All patients are recommended to

have the implants removed at the clinic where they received them."

Anyone who chose not to do so should undergo annual checks, it added.

The country's largest health insurer, the state-run VZP, said it would pay the removal cost for breast cancer survivors -- but not for women who had received the implants for cosmetic purposes.

A top British health official said Friday there was no evidence to warrant a general recommendation for the implants' removal.

But any woman who had them inserted by the NHS and were worried, could have them removed free of charge, the health ministry said, calling on private health providers to match the offer.

Ninety-five percent of women who had their implants in Britain had it done in the private sector.

Also Friday, nearly 500 Venezuelans filed suit with a court in Caracas against the local distributors of PIPs implants to get them to pay the costs of removing them and replacing them with industry standard implants.

The complaint targetted companies that commercialised PIP's implants in Venezuela, Gilberto Andrea, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, told journalists.

Andrea said he represented some 470 [women](#).

Several of them accompanied him to the court building brandishing certificates that said they had been fitted with PIP [implants](#) and others with ultrasound read-outs showing flaws.

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