

Breast cancer survivors benefit from fat transfers after mastectomies

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(Medical Xpress) -- When Susan McLain, 49, underwent a double mastectomy, she never imagined that she would look and feel better after reconstructive surgery than she did before breast cancer.

“I look great now,” McLain said. “I am thrilled with the outcome. You would never know that I had cancer.”

McLain was diagnosed with [breast cancer](#) last October after undergoing a routine mammogram. She soon learned that the cancer had spread to her [lymph nodes](#). A multidisciplinary team of health-care providers at Loyola University Health System (LUHS) treated her with chemotherapy and radiation. McLain also underwent a [double mastectomy](#) and surgery to remove several lymph nodes. After the procedure, doctors implanted tissue expanders to prepare for reconstructive surgery using silicone breast implants.

The radiation and the removal of her lymph nodes and breast tissue left divots in her skin even after the breast reconstructive procedure. Plastic surgeons opted to perform an additional procedure on McLain where they removed fat from her stomach through liposuction and transferred it to the area around her implants to improve the symmetry of her result.

“Radiation and surgery can damage the appearance of the breast,” said Victor Cimino, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon at LUHS.

“Women who undergo a fat transfer tend to appreciate that their own tissue is being used to naturally enhance the look and feel of their breasts

after reconstructive surgery."

Fat transfers are becoming increasingly popular following breast [reconstructive surgery](#). Plastic surgeons typically remove the fat from the abdomen, thighs or buttocks and concentrate it before transferring it into a designated area of the body to create a desired shape and softness. This procedure also can be used to rejuvenate and add fullness to the face, hands and lips.

McLain underwent a series of fat-transfer procedures. Each step was performed on a Thursday, and she returned to work the following Monday with minimal pain and scarring.

"I feel great and have even returned to exercising regularly," McLain said. "I also spend a lot of time outside in the summer, and it has been nice to not feel self-conscious about my appearance."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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