

No more limits for breast reconstruction after tumour surgery

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Credit: Medical University of Vienna

For many breast cancer patients, the complete or partial loss of their breasts after tumour removal is traumatising. "There is no need to worry because there are many methods of restoring breasts to ensure the

integrity of the body and femininity. What is important is the early and precise planning of therapy and treatment at a special centre such as the MedUni Vienna and the Vienna General Hospital (AKH)," says Christine Radtke, Head of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the MedUni Vienna/ Vienna General Hospital, member of the Comprehensive Cancer Center of MedUni Vienna/ Vienna General Hospital and expert for breast reconstruction, on the occasion of the Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October.

Every year, 5,000 women come down with breast [cancer](#) in Austria. Surgical removal of the tumour is still one of the most important components of a successful therapy, but often results in the loss of [breast tissue](#) or makes complete removal of the breast necessary. Radtke would like to encourage the women concerned, because as long as there is no other life-threatening concomitant disease, there are almost no limits today when it comes to reconstructing the breast completely or partially.

Radtke states: "A [reconstruction](#) which also provides excellent aesthetic results, is open to all women. An experienced plastic surgeon adapts the methods she uses for reconstruction to the individual body of her patient. This means that the significance of factors such as overweight or underweight is fading into the background. The only important thing is that the patient is motivated and that the planning of the therapy is carried out at an early stage and in an interdisciplinary manner, because it is of utmost importance for the functional and aesthetic result to coordinate the medical measures." A reconstruction of the breast only makes sense after radiotherapy or chemotherapy, if applicable, as both treatments can cause changes in the tissue that would require a new operation necessary.

Reconstruction only in a specialised centre

It is important for a good medical and aesthetic result to visit a special

centre for the entire treatment, such as the Breast Health Centre of the Comprehensive Cancer Center of MedUni Vienna/ Vienna General Hospital (CCC-BGZ; Director: Michael Gnant). Breast cancer therapy in these centres is carried out on an interdisciplinary basis and the infrastructure is state-of-the-art. In addition, the treatment team has the best possible expertise due to the high number of cases and constant scientific discussions. Radtke says: "At the CCC, all the necessary disciplines are available, from oncology, radiotherapy and surgery to psycho-oncology and are able to work together in an interdisciplinary manner, which means significant time savings in treatment. Of course, we also benefit from the close proximity and short distances. Therefore, we can respond to the wishes of our patients, right from the start, and communicate to them what is possible and find out together the optimal solution for their situation."

Sharing knowledge

Radtke is not only an acknowledged expert in [breast reconstruction](#): due to a [breast cancer](#) case in her immediate family, she also knows the side of the affected person well. It is therefore of particular concern to her to provide patients with the multitude of options for [breast](#) reconstruction and to take away their shyness in contacting an expert. In the best case, this can be done before the therapy begins, but also if they have already undergone reconstruction and problems arise. She says: "In most cases, we can help and provide better results and thus a better quality of life."

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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