

Breast Implants: 10 questions and answers

The information currently being broadcast by some media can be confusing and worrying for the population. It is our duty to give accurate and rigorous information to our patients and we do it by respecting the Collège des médecins du Québec and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada continuing medical educational standards.

Q1: Is breast Implants used in Quebec are approved by Health Canada?

A1: All breast implants sold in Canada must meet the requirements of the Medical Device Settlement. Quebec Plastic surgeons most only use implants and medical devices duly approved by Health Canada. We also believe that Health Canada should keep a more rigorous register on breasts implants in order to obtain more specific data on all possible side effects.

Q2: What is the position of Quebec plastic surgeons regarding patient concerns about possible complications and adverse events related to their breast implants?

A2: Our primary concern as doctors is patient's safety and well-being. Each patient receives complete and precise information on possible complications. It is also reminded that a surgical intervention should be driven by a reflected and an informed decision. After the intervention, postoperative follow-up are highly recommended to insure the quality of the intervention and identify postoperative complication.

Q3: What are the principal complications related to Breast Implants?

A3: All surgical interventions have some risks. Although uncommon, the possibility of these risks cannot be ignored. The early complications related to breast implants are hematoma, infection, disruption of the incision and skin ulceration. The late complications are hardening of the breast, change of the nipple sensitivity and the implant rupture.

Q4: What is the position of Quebec plastic surgeons regarding the Breast Implant Illness?

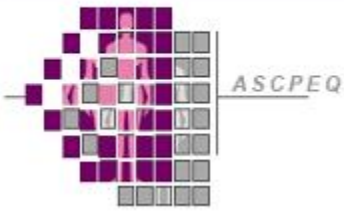
A4: The *Breast Implant Illness* is not a diagnosis recognized by the scientific community. Some women have reported nonspecific symptoms like chronic fatigue, hair loss, weight gain, headaches or diffused articular pain and want to have their implant remove. Although science does not associate those symptoms to breast implants and do not recommended specific treatment, women who desire to remove their implants could ask their surgeon.

Q5: What is the BIA-ALCL?

A5: The Breast Implant Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL) **is a really rare and treatable entity**. It is known by the scientific community since many years and would be associated to textured implants only, silicone or saline. In Quebec, less than 10% of breast implanted women have textured implants. This type of cancer is limited to the fibrous capsule and manifest by a breast swelling, often caused by liquid accumulation around the implant many years after the surgery. Those conditions require to the retirement of the capsule (complete capsulectomie) and the implants. Actually, there are 27 known cases in Canada (600 in the world in eight years). In Quebec, one case has been reported and the patient has been successfully treated. The risk is estimate to 1/30 000 textured breasts implants carriers, with saline or silicone filers. More scientific studies are process to establish the causality link between textured implants and this condition.

Q6: What is the position of Quebec plastic surgeons regarding autoimmune disease?

A6: Recently, we reissue the hypothesis that autoimmune diseases (lupus erythematosus, scleroderma, rheumatoid arthritis) would be linked to silicone. A small proportion of women would be likely to develop this type of problem and other factors could be involved (genetic, environment). Silicone is found in many environmental product and we even ingest it with our food! Needle used by person with diabetes are coated of silicone, which leaves traces in the skin. Breast Implants have been and still are to most study by science. Since the end of 90's, hundreds of studies have been done on thousands of patients and the consensus, nowadays, is that there are no scientific proof that women with



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silicone breasts implants are more at risk than others. At the most, there would be a possible increase of the risk. Numerous studies are process to better verify this hypothesis and we invite patients to discuss with their plastic surgeon of any health problems that worries them.

Q7: How many women receive breast implants each year in Quebec?

A7: We estimate that 8 000 to 8 500 women receive breast implant each year, for breast reconstruction, aesthetic reason or for a change of prosthesis. The ratio silicone vs saline prosthesis is around 60% for 40%. Thirty pour cents (30%) are for reconstructive purposes and 70% for aesthetic purposes. About 7% to 10% are textured implants.

Q8: How many women in Quebec are wearing breast implants?

A8: This number is not known precisely. A very rough estimation let us believe that they would be around 145 000 breast implants carriers.

Q9: If someone with a breast augmentation requests removal of their implants would they be required to pay for this – or does that depend on the reason for removal?

A9: In Quebec, if there is a medical indication to the removal of the implants, the procedure will be covered. However, the replacement of a new device is generally not covered.

Q10: Would most plastic surgeons who treat implant patients be willing to see other's patients for a second opinions or if their original had left practice?

A10: Generally, yes. The problem will be the timing, If the patients call and would like to be seen in a reasonable time frame then most plastic surgeons (especially those with a breast surgery practice) will certainly see those patients for assessments, advice and care as indicated. If patients call asking or demanding to be seen immediately, the medical team will do their best to accommodate the patient.

ABOUT ASCPEQ

The ASCPEQ regroup plastic surgeons of Quebec and has for mission to represent its members and offering continuing medical education in order to meet the requirements of the College des médecins du Québec and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The ASCPEQ is also dedicated to promote quality care that meets the needs of the population. You will find the list of Quebec Plastic Surgeons on our web site at www.ascpeq.org