

alt**health** Making the breast of it

Return of scary silicone a sign we need freeing from boob fixation By ELIZABETH BROMSTEIN

SO, AFTER A 14-YEAR PARTIAL BAN, silicone gel breast implants are available on the Canadian market again. Some doctors and patients are thrilled. Others are horrified and say the devices are still potentially unsafe.

According to Health Canada, the implants have been intensively studied, and there's no evidence of a connection between the silicone they contain and auto-immune disease, systemic illness or cancer. Don't assume,

though, that they're risk-free.

I'm not one of those people who has a problem with people wanting fake tits. I think if you want them you should have them. But I also think you should look long and hard at your reasons and be well aware of the risks and potential complications.

These include, says Health Canada, rupture, pain, disfigurement and serious infection. Implants may also impede breastfeeding and make mam-

mography screening more difficult.

Also, they will not necessarily last forever, and you "will likely" need additional surgeries over time. Still want 'em? Maybe not, eh?

Wondering if there are other ways to enhance your chest size? Alas, not really, short of getting knocked up or taking the oral contraceptives that makes some people swell in the chest area. Of course, we could try just being content with what we've got.

What the experts say

"The cultural environment privileges large, pneumatically enhanced female bodies and tends to convince women that's what sexy looks like. We have taken the image prevalent in pornography and transposed it into popular culture. Turn off the television. Research shows that the more immersed people are in image-based popular culture, the more likely they are to be dissatisfied with themselves. The greater the discrepancy between your reflection in the mirror and the images you're surrounded by in the media, the more likely you are to find fault with your own reflection. The way to avoid that is **not to immerse yourself in those images.**"

SHARI GRAYDON, author *In Your Face: The Culture Of Beauty And You*, Ottawa

"The major thing that has changed since the early 90s is that we now have an incredible wealth of information about these implants and about silicone in general. We looked at over 65,000 pages of information. There were a large number of really big studies that showed no link with systemic disease, immune disease and cancer. There has also been a change in the manufacturing of these devices. The gel is thicker and more cohesive, and the barrier is thicker. No medical device is considered 100 per cent safe. This is still a foreign body, and of course there are going to be risks. The major risks are local."

Supriya Sharma, associate director-general of the therapeutic products directorate, Health Canada, Ottawa

"[To increase chest size] you might be able to do a few chest presses, but the results would be minimal and then you'd actually get the reverse effect. Chest presses are done with dumbbells, in an inclined position, lifting the weights up in front of your chest. This would only make you feel better and firmer in that area, but with increased weightlifting you would lose fat and

breast tissue. Because your breasts are made of fat, you could eventually make them smaller."

JACQUELINE GRADISH, personal trainer, Toronto

"If you think of the breasts as a signal to males for reproductive purposes, crystals that enhance femininity such as **rose quartz, garnet, and moonstone** will be beneficial. Find a smooth crystal, rub some light sesame oil on the breast and glide the crystal over the breast very gently, lightly and evenly in small circles for about five minutes several times a week. Breasts will increase in weight from circulation of hormonal fluids and swell with the sexual energy stimulation. Wearing a large **emerald** at the heart chakra will also enlarge the breasts after several weeks. You could also try **warm compresses** to the breast. If you **stay near a fire** so that the heat warms the chest, breasts get bigger. Also **eating oats** is

said to be very helpful and increases lactation in nursing mothers."

KAREN RYAN, crystal healer, Toronto

"Women with implants actually have less cancer than the rest of the population and tend to be healthier, though they do have a slightly higher incidence of suicide. Any implant has the potential to fail and part of your decision to have this surgery is the understanding that you might need another operation. No one would be able to tell you what that likelihood is because the current generation of implants has only been used for around 12 years. The experience has been that they last and last but nobody wants to give a lifetime guarantee. Patients need to be careful that they are actually seeing a **plastic surgeon**, not a cosmetic surgeon. Cosmetic surgery is completely unregulated."

MICHAEL KREIDSTEIN, MD, MSC, FRCS(C), Toronto

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