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BREAST RECONSTRUCTION *BY* **SUSAN E. KOLB, M.D., F.A.C.S.**

Losing a breast to cancer or a precancerous disease can be an emotionally traumatic experience. As Plastic Surgeons one of our most rewarding areas of reconstruction is that of the breast. Breast reconstruction restores balance, beauty and harmony to the female form. Often we have an opportunity to enhance and improve upon the opposite breast as well so although a woman has lost a breast to cancer, the reconstruction can be an improvement from the prior effects of aging, pregnancy and gravity on the breast.

The breast represents nurturing and with a breast deformity this important aspect of the female is incomplete. We seek to first restore the breast mound through the use of several techniques depending upon the patient's preference, health status and medical history. We can create a breast mound through the use of a tissue expander placed under the chest wall tissues and expanded at intervals after surgery. The patient's own tissue can often be used to create a breast mound using tissue either from the abdomen or the back. If there is not enough tissue to create the size breast desired then a small saline (salt water) filled implant can be added to increase the volume. Finally, some surgeons are using tissues from other areas such as the buttocks to create a breast mound with microsurgery.

After the breast mound is created then we turn our attention to the reconstruction of the nipple areolar complex and to the procedures to create a proportionate opposite breast.

Nipple areolar complexes are usually created through the use of local tissues to form the protruding nipples. The areola can be reconstructed with skin grafts and/or tattoo techniques.

The opposite breast can be reduced in size, increased in size and lifted if needed in order to match the reconstructed breast in size and shape. Often these procedures are performed at the time of the nipple areolar reconstruction.

Plastic surgery combines the best of surgical technology and the art of the sculptor to create the most perfect recreation of the form our creator chose for the breast, the symbol of nurturing.

As a great plastic surgeon once said, "We restore, rebuild and make whole those parts which nature has taken away, not so much that it may delight the eye, but that it may buoy up the spirit and help the mind of the afflicted."