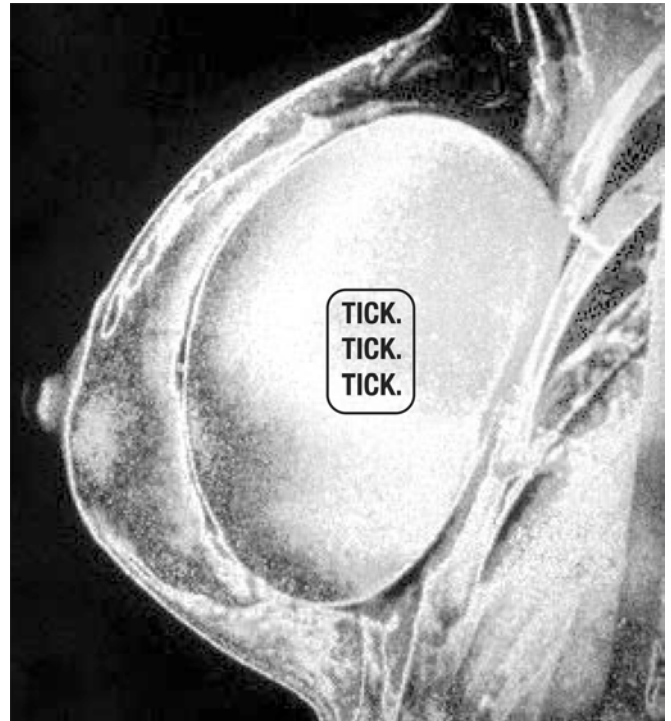


Breast Implants are Safe



Breast implants have become a worldwide multi-billion dollar industry based on cultivating women's insecurities about their bodies, while failing to prove that implants are safe over the long-term.

Last year, after a 14 year ban, the Food and Drug Administration approved marketing silicone-gel breast implants to women aged 22 and older. This unfortunate decision was made – after much pressure by the Bush administration, plastic surgeons and implant manufacturers – despite evidence of serious health risks.



Implants Are Risky – National Cancer Institute studies indicate that women who have breast implants have twice the risk of brain cancer, three times the risk for lung cancer, emphysema, pneumonia and at least twice the risk of suicide. Despite evidence of serious health risks, breast implants are increasing sold in the U.S. and abroad. In 2006 alone, 329 thousand breast augmentation procedures were performed in this country – up from 101 thousand in 1997. Costing between \$4,000 and \$8,000, breast implants have become big business, with potentially tragic results millions of women. **All implants leak (both silicone gel-filled and saline) and all eventually rupture.** Some women report becoming ill immediately after getting implants; many more report problems years later. In many cases, their health improves after removal of the implants.

Implants Hide Breast Cancer – Implants interfere with mammography in that about 55 percent of breast tissue is obscured. As a result, 67 percent more tumors are missed in mammography exams in women who have breast implants, according to a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association. In addition, some implants rupture during the procedure when the breast is compressed. **Women with implants who have painful capsular contracture (calcification of tissue around the breast) or whose breasts are extremely sensitive often avoid exams and risk not having early detection of breast cancer.**

Women Aren't Told Truth – Women have not been told the truth about implants. **Breast implant manufacturers and plastic surgeons have minimized the risks, conducted biased and flawed studies and spent millions on advertising campaigns to persuade women that they need breast implants.** Women with implants report rashes, dry mouth, coughing, chronic fatigue, memory impairment, sleeplessness, stiff joints, muscle weakness, excessive hair loss, breast pain and other problems. When they consult their doctors, they are often told “it's all in your head” or receive a mis-diagnosis and their conditions worsen.

Do Implants Cause Diseases? – Hundreds of thousands of women have become ill and some have even died – and many have pointed to their implants as the cause. Though more research is needed, there is a growing body of research evidence that women with breast implants are more likely to report auto-immune symptoms typical of fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome and other diseases. More long-term research is needed to understand the potential link between breast implants and these symptoms and diseases, as well as multiple sclerosis, Lupus and Sjogren's syndrome.

Breasts Become Super-sensitive And Harden – In many cases, implanted breasts become so sensitive that women do not want to be touched and, at the same time, nipples lose their sensitivity. The shape of a breast can change, implants can move around, and often the body reacts to implants by forming a hard calcium shell around the implant that looks and feels like a baseball. Obviously, **having super-sensitive breasts, a deadened feeling in the nipples, or rock hard breasts can affect both self-image and intimate relationships.**

Implants Will Leak – Women have been told that implants last a lifetime. Yet, both silicone and saline implants rupture and leak. Usually, **they only last 8 to 12 years; many rupture or deteriorate within a few years.** When you have a leaking implant, it must be removed and the cost to remove is high – \$10,000 to \$15,000. For silicone implants it is difficult to detect rupture, so women are advised to have frequent MRI's – at an un-insured cost of \$750 to \$1,200.

Illnesses Seen in Children – The presence of implants could impede lactation in new mothers. Additionally, it has been reported to the FDA that some **children born to women with silicone implants have developed unusual illnesses or have deformities.** A 2006 study found high levels of toxic platinum salts in the blood, urine, hair, nails, sweat and breast milk of women and children exposed to silicone gel breast implants, some of whom suffer from rare autoimmune diseases.

Insurance Companies Refuse Coverage – To make matters worse, insurance companies restrict or deny coverage to women who have implants. They may refuse to cover medical services for any illnesses or injuries in the chest area, including the lungs. Insurance policies do not always spell this out in their written policies, **but deny coverage for implantation or explantation (removal) unless you are a mastectomy patient.** So, if you have complications or just need to replace aging implants, the total cost could well exceed \$100,000 with successive procedures over a lifetime.

Most of the breast implant websites on the Internet are sponsored by cosmetic surgeons, manufacturers and plastic surgery associations; they do not fully disclose problems with implants. But here are a few that can be trusted:

- <http://www.now.org/issues/health/implants/index.html> – about the work of the National Organization for Women in demanding that breast implants be safe.
- <http://www.cpr4womenandfamilies.org> and <http://www.breastimplantinfo.org> – for detailed information on studies conducted about breast implant safety and for fact-based advice.
- <http://www.beautyandthebreast.org> – a lively and informative blog by women with implant experiences and includes other feminist health and body image concerns.
- *Absolutely Safe* – a documentary film (by Carol Leyva of Amaranth Productions) being screened around the country. See <http://www.absolutelysafe.com>.
- *Two Small Voices* – a dramatization of the personal story of Sybil Goldrich, a mastectomy patient who first called attention to breast implant health risks. DVD available on Amazon.com for \$9.99.
- <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/breastimplants/qa2006.html> – the FDA's patient information on breast implants which is quite detailed, but fails to fully inform the patient of all risks and costs involved.

The National Organization for Women has led the effort to demand that the FDA not approve implants which are not safe and to have more independent studies conducted about the connection between implants and serious illnesses in women and in their children. It is clear that our government does not care about women's health and is only listening to powerful corporations. Join NOW's efforts to bring about better research and more accountability from government health agencies and companies,
<http://www.now.org/support.html>