

Bilateral mastectomy

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Bilateral Mastectomy-Is it the right solution? Bilateral mastectomy is a pre-emptive surgical procedure to completely remove the glandular breast tissue in patients with high risk of breast cancer. It is performed on patients who have all the genetic markers and are at very high risk of developing the disease. It is known to reduce the risk by almost 90%. It is recommended especially in the case of women who have BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 (which increases chances of breast cancer by 85%) or have already cancer present in one of the breast (Fox, 2010).

However, it is important to reach the right solution. Especially with the medical diagnosis and risk reduction measures available today for breast cancer, I believe not. Research shows that it is technically impossible to remove all the breast tissue which is spread in the chest wall so even with drastic procedure the odds will never be completely in favour of you. You can still get cancer (Sokolowski, et. al., 2010).

Surveillance or close monitoring with regular mammograms and clinical breast examination can help in early detection while drugs like tamoxifen or raloxifene have been shown to decrease the chances of getting breast cancer in women at high risk of the disease (Fox, 2010). Along with these, reduction in alcohol intake, avoiding menopausal hormone and regular exercise may also help.

Although more young women are engaging in this surgery, it should all also be taken into account that close breast examination has to continue to make sure that the cancer is not developing. The operation itself can lead to complications like internal bleeding and infection if not performed by experts. The benefits of surgery are further limited by age and other physical factors.

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Although many women with a long family history for breast cancer may be ready to take this drastic step, it is not a good preventive measure. The implications of the procedure are extreme and many women may never be able to cope with the operative complications, psychological effects and sexual issues thus it is safer to take alternative measures.

References:

Fox, Jackie. From Zero to Mastectomy: What I learned and you need to know about Stage 0 Breast Cancer. 1st Edition. Honeyoker Press. 2010. Print.

Sokolowski, Nancy; Valerie Rossy and Richard Zelkowitz. The Breast Cancer companion: A guide for the newly diagnosed. 1st Edition. Demos Health. 2010. Press.