

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING RESENSATION

The importance of sensation

Why do women lose breast sensation after mastectomy?

Sensory nerves run from your breasts to the brain. They send messages that allow you to feel touch, temperature and even pain.

During a mastectomy, these nerves must be cut so the breast tissue can be removed. If the nerves aren't repaired during breast reconstruction, they can no longer send signals to the brain. This can result in numbness and permanent loss of sensation to the breast area.

What's the impact of losing breast sensation?

Loss of sensation after mastectomy can have a negative impact on your life. Think of how it feels when your mouth is numbed at the dentist. Or the weird sensation of bumping your foot after it's fallen asleep, and you realize you can't feel it. Numbness in your chest may be similar. Without the ability to detect touch, you might have a somewhat disconnected sense of your chest. The temperature of water in the shower, burns from hot objects like curling irons, or cuts from sharp objects—you might not feel any of it.

Research has shown that loss of breast sensation can affect body image and mental health, as well as the risk of injury.^{1,2} For many women, breasts without sensation don't feel like a part of their own body.³ Losing sensation can make it difficult to move past your mastectomy and start to feel whole again.⁴

What are the potential benefits of restoring breast sensation?

Studies suggest that restoring breast sensation may improve your physical safety, body image and emotional health.⁵ A recent study found that women who had undergone Resensation® had experienced a positive impact on their quality of life after mastectomy and were more likely to report their reconstructed breasts "felt like their own."^{6,7}

Women report that regaining sensation helped them recover and move on from their experience with cancer, mastectomy and reconstruction. It also helped them feel more like their old selves.⁷

Understanding the resensation technique

What is Resensation?

Resensation is a surgical nerve repair technique performed during breast reconstruction. It can be performed during autologous (free flap) reconstruction and some breast implant reconstruction procedures. It allows surgeons to reconnect the nerves that were cut during a mastectomy by using allograft tissue—processed nerve allograft through the gift of donated nerve tissue. Over time, the nerve fibers regenerate, becoming a part of your own body. As the nerve fibers grow, they have the potential to gradually restore sensation to the breasts.

Historically, sensory nerves were not repaired during breast reconstruction surgery, leaving women with limited sensation—or none at all. While reconstructed breasts can help women look the way they want, without actively repairing nerves, women typically cannot feel touch or temperature in the chest area after reconstruction.

How long does it take to regain feeling after Resensation?

Plastic surgeons who perform Resensation report that women usually start to regain sensation several months after surgery. The feelings can continue to develop for up to two years.⁸ It takes time for nerves to heal and grow after they are repaired because they typically regenerate at a rate of 1 millimeter a day.⁹

When is Resensation performed?

Resensation is performed at the same time as breast reconstruction. It can either be performed during an immediate reconstruction (at the same time as the mastectomy) or a delayed reconstruction (months or years after the mastectomy).

Resensation may also be possible if you consider revising a previous implant reconstruction. You and your plastic surgeon can determine the right timing based on your desires, medical condition and cancer treatment.

Your unique needs

What if I've already had breast reconstruction?

Resensation is performed at the time of immediate or delayed breast reconstruction and may be possible during a revision to implant surgery. If you have specific questions about your case, it's best to reach out to a surgeon specializing in this technique, like Dr. Stefan Szczerba or Dr. Sameer Kapadia for a consult.

Can Resensation be performed during an aesthetic flat closure (no reconstruction)?

Resensation may be an option for those seeking an aesthetic flat closure after mastectomy. During your consultation Dr. Stefan Szczerba or Dr. Sameer Kapadia can discuss specific details of your case and help determine if this is an option for you.

What type of surgeon performs Resensation?

Resensation requires a plastic reconstructive surgeon like Dr. Stefan Szczerba or Dr. Sameer Kapadia who has expertise in microsurgery and is skilled at using microscopes and precision instrumentation to repair blood vessels, nerves and other intricate structures.

Am I a candidate for Resensation?

You may be a candidate for Resensation if you are undergoing immediate or delayed breast reconstruction after having a mastectomy. Dr. Stefan Szczerba and Dr. Sameer Kapadia are trained in the Resensation surgical technique and can help determine if you would be a candidate for the procedure.

Is Resensation covered by insurance?

Breast reconstruction is a covered procedure. However, Resensation (breast neurotization) coverage may vary by insurer. Our insurance specialists will work with you to request pre-authorization before your procedure.