

# A BOOST OF CONFIDENCE

A reader tells *Phoon Chi Ho* how opting for breast augmentation helped her feel more confident about her body.

Pauline\*, a mother of two in her 30s, always thought about having breast augmentation – a desire she harboured since she was a teenager. “I have always wanted to augment my breasts since I was in college. My intention was purely personal and I was a 100 percent sure I wanted to have the procedure done. But if anyone has any doubts about cosmetic surgery, even one percent, they shouldn’t do it,” she stresses.

After toying with the idea for about 18 years, Pauline finally underwent the procedure, just five months after giving birth to her second child. “I decided to wait until the birth of my second child to avoid any potential complications. I wanted to wait until my family was complete, and I’m now glad I had the procedure done. If I had to decide all over again whether to opt for breast augmentation or not, I would still say ‘Yes!’” Pauline reveals.

## FINDING FACTS

Before deciding on any type of procedure, it is always important to conduct thorough research on your own first so that you are aware of the available options.

Pauline did just that, and managed to gather sufficient and adequate information on breast augmentation over the Internet. “Do as much research as possible on your own, so that you can make a sound decision. Over the Internet, I managed to research potential risks, the type of implants to opt for, and even found my plastic surgeon this way too,” says Pauline.

Undeniably the most integral part when deciding on cosmetic surgery, selecting the right plastic surgeon can make a big difference to your surgical outcome. Equipped with several surgeons’ numbers, Pauline made the necessary appointments.

“I had a really bad experience with the first doctor I saw. He was very abrupt and not well-mannered. He was adamant on wanting to see the ‘condition’ of my breasts first before offering any suggestions. I will not go back to that doctor ever again.

“But when I finally had a consultation with my MACS plastic surgeon, it was different,” states Pauline. “Besides helping me narrow down my options, I honestly felt he cared about the outcome of my procedure from a personal level as well. He told me that the decision shouldn’t be based on what others thought, as this was a personal choice. ‘Don’t do it because you think it will help you career or love life, do it for yourself,’ he said.”

## A 'JOB' WELL DONE

After an hour-long consultation, Pauline decided to have the surgery to increase her breast size from an A-cup to a B-cup. She opted for textured silicone implants, and her recovery following the procedure, went smoothly.

"Immediately after the surgery, I was in some pain – it was difficult to lift my arms, but the pain gradually wore off in a few weeks. For the next three months, I followed my surgeon's advice closely and did some massage therapies to ensure that everything would be okay," says Pauline.

Though Pauline feels more confident and complete now, arriving to this point was not easy and was met with some disapproval. While her decision to have breast augmentation did not fare well with those closest to her, she wasn't going to let the opinions of others derail a decision that took her almost two decades to come to. "My family and friends tried to discourage me many times, but after seeing how unhappy I was with my body, they eventually gave in," Pauline divulges. "If you are happy with yourself, others should be too. But if you're not happy with your body and it is bothering you, then do something about it."

And that was exactly what Pauline did.

*\*Name changed to protect patient's privacy*

## THE SCOOP ON BREAST AUGMENTATION

### ***Implants***

Your surgeon will help you decide what type of implant to go for. Besides various sizes, you will also have to decide between implants that consist of saline, silicone or firm cohesive silicone gel – these come in round or teardrop shapes. Implant surfaces are either smooth or textured (rough silicone shell surface).

### ***The Procedure***

The surgery usually takes between one to two hours to complete. The surgeon can make an incision either under the breast fold, in the armpit or around the nipple. The implant is inserted either above or beneath the chest muscles. The type of procedure is individualised to suit each patient's requests and to achieve the best surgical outcome based on certain criteria.

Most surgeons insert a fine drainage tube around the surgical site, on either breast, to drain any liquid that collects after your surgery (which is normal) – these tubes are removed after a day. The incisions are then closed with stitches that do not go through the skin surface, thus, leaving no stitch marks. Implants can be removed or replaced with one of a different size, depending on circumstantial events or the patient's preference.

**Post-op**

After the wounds are closed, a supporting bra or bandage has to be worn. Patients might experience discomfort immediately after the surgery, which will wear off after a day or so. After an overnight's stay, patients can be discharged with oral painkillers and a course of antibiotics in hand.

After four to seven days, office and light work can be resumed while heavy work can be resumed after about 10 days. Sutures are normally removed after seven to 10 days.

Patients are advised against wearing tight bras as this might lead to capsular contracture (see *Risks*) in the long-run, but a well-fitted bra (a selection your surgeon will help you with) is advised to be worn, day and night, at least two weeks after the surgery.

**Risks**

One of the most common post-operative risk with breast augmentation is capsular contracture, which is the formation of scar tissue encapsulating the implant as a result of the body's defensive measures against foreign material. Although this is natural and expected, breast tissue can react unpredictably by contracting or thickening, or both, causing the breast to harden or distort.

Other risks can include implant rupture, asymmetry, rejection of implants and sensory impairment especially in the nipple – all of which are rare occurrences. Risks are such as bleeding, haematoma (pocket of blood beneath skin), scarring and infections can also occur, though rare.