

Breast Implant Types: A Complete Guide

Choosing the right breast implant is one of the most important decisions in [breast augmentation](#). The best implant is not simply the biggest, newest or most expensive option. It should be selected according to your body shape, breast tissue, skin quality, lifestyle, desired result and surgical plan.



Modern [breast implants](#) come in different fillings, shapes, profiles, surfaces and sizes. Each option has advantages and limitations, so a detailed consultation with an experienced breast implant surgeon is essential.

Silicone Breast Implants

Silicone implants are the most commonly used implants in modern cosmetic breast surgery. They are filled with cohesive silicone gel, which is designed to feel soft and natural while maintaining shape. Silicone implants are often chosen because they tend to feel more like natural breast tissue and may show less rippling than saline implants, particularly in slim patients with limited breast tissue.

There are different degrees of gel firmness. Softer silicone implants may feel more natural, while firmer cohesive gel implants can provide more shape and upper pole support. Highly cohesive implants are sometimes described as "gummy bear" implants because the gel holds together more firmly.

Saline Breast Implants

Saline implants have a silicone outer shell but are filled with sterile salt water. They are used less commonly in the UK for cosmetic breast enlargement, but they remain an option in some situations. One advantage is that if a saline implant ruptures, the breast usually deflates and the saline is safely absorbed by the body.

The main disadvantage is that saline implants may feel less natural and can be [breast implants](#) more prone to visible rippling, especially in thinner patients or when placed above the muscle.

Round Breast Implants

Round implants are widely used in [breast augmentation](#). They can create fullness in the upper part of the breast and are suitable for many patients who want a [breast augmentation](#) fuller, enhanced look. When a round implant is placed correctly, it can still look natural, particularly if the implant size and profile match the patient's frame.

Round implants are also useful because rotation is less of a concern. If a round implant moves, the breast shape usually remains unchanged.

Teardrop or Anatomical Breast Implants

Teardrop implants, also called anatomical implants, are shaped with more fullness at the lower part of the implant. They are designed to mimic the natural slope of the breast. These implants may be useful in patients who want a more subtle, natural shape or in some reconstructive cases.



The main consideration is that anatomical implants must stay in the correct position. If they rotate, they can distort the breast shape. For this reason, they are often made with a textured surface, although textured implants require careful discussion because of their association with BIA-ALCL, a rare lymphoma linked mainly to textured implant surfaces.

Smooth Breast Implants

Smooth implants have a soft outer surface and are commonly used in modern cosmetic breast surgery. They can move more naturally within the breast pocket and are often selected for patients having breast enlargement with silicone implants.

Smooth implants are generally preferred by many surgeons today because concerns about textured implants have led to greater caution around their use.

Textured Breast Implants

Textured implants have a rougher outer shell. They were originally developed to reduce implant movement and may help anatomical implants remain in position. However, textured implants have been linked with breast implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma, known as BIA-ALCL. This is uncommon, but it is an important risk to discuss before surgery.

Current safety guidance does not generally recommend removal of textured implants in patients who have no symptoms, but patients should be aware of symptoms such as late swelling, a new lump, persistent breast pain or sudden changes in breast shape.

Low, Moderate, High and Extra High Profile Implants

Implant profile describes how much the implant projects forwards from the chest wall. A low-profile implant is wider and flatter, while a high-profile implant is narrower with more forward projection.

Moderate profile implants can suit patients who want a natural enhancement. High-profile implants may suit patients with a narrower chest who want more projection. Extra high-profile implants can create a more augmented look, but they must be used carefully to avoid an unnatural appearance or excessive pressure on the tissues.



Choosing the Right Implant Size

Implant size is measured in cubic centimetres, or cc, rather than cup size. Cup size is not standardised between bra brands, so it is not a reliable way to choose an implant. A 300cc implant may look very different on two patients depending on their height, chest width, breast base, tissue thickness and skin stretch.

The safest and most predictable approach is to choose an implant that fits the breast footprint and soft tissue envelope. An implant that is too large can increase the risk of visible edges, rippling, bottoming out, stretched skin, implant malposition and revision surgery.

Implant Placement

The type of implant must also be considered alongside implant placement. Implants can be placed above the muscle, below the muscle or in a dual plane position. A dual plane technique partly places the implant under the pectoral muscle while allowing the lower part of the implant to sit beneath the breast tissue. This can be helpful in slimmer patients because it gives more soft tissue cover in the upper breast.

Patients with more natural breast tissue may be suitable for placement above the muscle. This can offer a quicker recovery and avoid animation deformity, but it may not be ideal if the tissues are thin.

Which Breast Implant Type Looks Most Natural?

A natural-looking result depends less on one specific implant type and more on matching the implant to the patient. A moderate-sized silicone implant, carefully selected for width, projection and tissue cover, often gives a natural result. The surgical technique, implant pocket, incision placement and healing process also influence the final appearance.

For some patients, round implants can look very natural. For others, anatomical implants may be considered. The key is individual planning rather than choosing an implant based only on photographs or trends.

Are Breast Implants Safe?

Breast implants are approved medical devices, but they are not lifetime devices. Patients should understand that they may need further surgery in the future for implant replacement, rupture, capsular contracture, implant malposition, size change or personal preference.

Important risks include bleeding, infection, altered nipple sensation, scarring, asymmetry, capsular contracture, rupture, rippling and the need for revision surgery. Rare implant-related conditions, including BIA-ALCL and other uncommon capsule-related cancers, should also be discussed during consent.

How to Choose the Best Breast Implant

The best implant is the one that suits your anatomy, goals and long-term safety. During a consultation, your surgeon should assess your chest width, breast base, tissue thickness, nipple position, breast symmetry, skin quality and lifestyle. They should also discuss the benefits and risks of each implant type in clear, balanced language.

Patients considering [breast implants](#) should avoid choosing based only on cup size or social media images. A good result should look balanced, feel comfortable and age well with the body.

Summary

There are many types of breast implants, including silicone, saline, round, anatomical, smooth, textured, low-profile and high-profile implants. Each has a role, but not every implant is right for every patient. The most important decision is not simply the implant itself, but how it is selected and placed.

If you are considering [breast augmentation](#), a detailed consultation with an experienced breast implant surgeon can help you understand your options and choose an implant that is safe, proportionate and suited to your body.

References

Medical literature and safety guidance note that silicone and saline implants are approved for breast surgery, implants are not lifetime devices, silicone rupture may be silent, and textured implants are associated with BIA-ALCL. Further reading: FDA breast implant safety updates and NCBI reviews on breast implant safety.