

Policy Statement:	Breast Reduction
Status:	Individual Prior Approval

Breast reduction surgery is a procedure used to treat women with breast hyperplasia (enlargement), where breasts are large enough to cause problems like shoulder girdle dysfunction, intertrigo and adverse effects to quality of life.

The NHS will only provide breast reduction for women if all the following criteria are met:

- The woman has received a full package of supportive care from their GP such as advice on weight loss and managing pain
- In cases of thoracic/ shoulder girdle discomfort, a physiotherapy assessment has been provided
- Breast size results in functional symptoms that require other treatments/interventions (e.g. intractable candidal intertrigo; thoracic backache/kyphosis where a professionally fitted bra has not helped with backache, soft tissue indentations at site of bra straps).
- Breast reduction planned to be 500gms or more per breast or at least 4 cup sizes*
- Body mass index (BMI) is <25 and stable for at least 2 years**
- Woman must be provided with written information to allow her to balance the risks and benefits of breast surgery
- Women should be informed that smoking increases complications following breast reduction surgery and should be advised to stop smoking.
- Women should be informed that breast surgery for hypermastia can cause permanent loss of lactation.

Cosmetic breast surgery (surgery undertaken exclusively to improve appearance) will not be funded to correct natural changes such as those associated with pregnancy or ageing.

*Resection weights should be recorded for audit purposes.

**“Stable weight”: Refers to weight with no greater fluctuation than +/- 5kg around the weight at the start of the two years. There must be evidence that weight independently assessed (e.g. through GP or weight management provider e.g. Weight Watchers/Slimming World) every 6 months during this time (i.e. 4 assessments taken over the 2 years).

Rationale

One systematic review and three non-randomized studies regarding breast reduction surgery for hypermastia were identified and showed that surgery is beneficial in patients with specific symptoms. Physical and psychological improvements, such as reduced pain, increased quality of life and less anxiety and depression were found for women with hypermastia following breast reduction surgery.

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Breast reduction surgery for hypermastia can cause permanent loss of lactation function of breasts, as well as decreased areolar sensation, bleeding, bruising, and scarring and often alternative approaches (e.g. weight loss or a professionally fitted bra) work just as well as surgery to reduce symptoms. For women who are severely affected by complications of hypermastia and for whom alternative approaches have not helped, surgery can be offered. The aim of surgery is not cosmetic, it is to reduce symptoms (e.g. back ache).

References

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Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy. Individual cases will be reviewed as per the CCG policy.

Please refer also to Cosmetic Surgery General Principles prior to submitting an exceptional funding request.

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