



# A Busty Burden

*Drew Barrymore, Ariel Winter and Patricia Heaton are just a few of the Hollywood actresses who have publicly lauded the positive impact breast reduction surgery has had on their lives, and it's a procedure that's growing in popularity here in New Zealand too.*

If you're one of the many women facing the reality of back, neck and shoulder pain, the inability to participate in everyday exercise and anxiety around clothing and lingerie shopping thanks to a disproportionate bust, it's probably an avenue you've thought about exploring yourself.

To learn about the ins and outs of this procedure, we continue to pick the brain of none other than Dr Katarzyna Mackenzie of Visage Plastic Surgery. A specialist in breast reduction surgery, Dr Mackenzie has adapted her training with world-class surgeons, the likes of Dr Elizabeth Hall-Findlay and Patrick Mallucci, to practice the same modern techniques here in New Zealand.

Being one of the very few female plastic surgeons in New Zealand, Dr Mackenzie brings a unique level of comfort and ease to her clientele. Breast reduction surgery is one of the most successful and immediately satisfying aesthetic procedures, thanks to the life-changing physical and emotional benefits. "Most commonly, women seek out the surgery because large breasts make them feel uncomfortable both physically and psychologically, and often someone in their life has told them about the surgery and the difference it made to them," shares Dr Mackenzie. "Patients post breast reduction are often the most satisfied group of patients I see due to the frequent major improvements

in both the aesthetic and the physical aspects."

Performed under general anesthesia, breast reduction surgery takes approximately four hours, and patients are able to go home after an overnight stay. "This plastic surgery procedure is designed to remove excess fat, glandular tissue and skin, leaving the patient with smaller breasts," Dr Mackenzie explains.

Understandably, the clientele mainly consists of mature women who are financially able to afford the surgery and often come in after hearing positive word-of-mouth experiences from their friends. However, Dr Mackenzie shares that in recent years, there have been growing spikes of enquiries from

adolescents who are suffering from physical and psychological pain and stress. “They want to feel like they belong in their social circle and be able to participate in simple activities such as sports,” she explains.

The major concern for teens who undergo this procedure is the risk of breast growth post-surgery. It occurs in about five per cent of patients; however, it’s interesting to note that in a recently published study, they argue that the positive benefits are worth the risk. “It was shown that breast reduction significantly improves breast-related symptoms and physical and psychosocial well-being of adolescent and young adult patients,” she explains.

For patients aged 12 to 21, the study concluded that the “fear of potential complications should not preclude otherwise healthy patients from the benefits that reduction mammoplasty can provide adolescents.” As long as the risks are understood and accepted with no evidence of obesity, Dr Mackenzie says that with preoperative counselling, adolescent breast reduction is safe and effective.

Breast reduction surgery is designed to make the breasts better supported, shaped and smaller, thus improving symptoms such as neck and shoulder pain as well as boosting self-confidence. Exercising becomes easier, and it provides an overall mental comfort as breasts are no longer the main focal point of the body. This procedure does, however, take significant consideration as each patient’s journey is unique, and the side effects impact people differently. Frequent risks are bruising, swelling, scarring, temporary numbness and change in nipple sensation. So, if you are looking to breastfeed in the near future, delaying the operation may be best as there is a chance that the operation may affect the ability to breastfeed.

“I’ve lost track of the women who have said to me, ‘I don’t know why I didn’t get this done earlier. This is the best thing I’ve ever done in my life,’” Dr Mackenzie says. All in all, the impacts that breast reduction surgery brings far outweigh the side-effects as it is not only physically burden-relieving but also psychologically cathartic. Free from cumbersome and disproportionately large breasts, post-op life gives women an opportunity to have a body with manageable assets and hit the refresh button to live to their fullest potential.

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