

How Pregnancy And Breastfeeding Impact Breast Implants

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It's no secret that women experience physical and hormonal changes during pregnancy. Aside from their expanding bellies, most women also experience enlarged breasts during gestation and postpartum. For women with breast implants, these changes can raise any number of questions: *Will I still be able to breastfeed? How will my implants look after pregnancy and nursing? Should I have waited until after having children to get implants?*

To understand how pregnancy and breastfeeding affect breast implants, we spoke to a board certified plastic surgeon and a patient for all the details.

The Impact of Pregnancy on Breast Implants

During pregnancy, women experience changes in the size and shape of their breasts — regardless of whether they have undergone a [breast augmentation](#). “Pregnancy will often change the shape of your breast tissue, but the implants will remain the same,” says [Melissa Doft, MD](#), a double board certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon and founder of Doft Plastic Surgery in New York City. “The hormonal changes during pregnancy affect the structure of your breasts but have no effect on the implant.”

Hormone levels (including estrogen and progesterone) coupled with weight fluctuations lead to changes to the breast. “Larger breast changes tend to occur with more significant weight gains and then loss,” Dr. Doft says. To avoid the dramatic variations that can lead to postpartum sagging and deflation, she recommends women take the advice of their OBGYN. “During your pregnancy, your obstetrician will help guide you on the appropriate amount of weight that your body should gain,” she explains.

“Try to stay within range of the recommendations to reduce the appearance of stretch marks, loose skin, and deflated breasts.”

With that in mind, you might be wondering if there is an ideal time to get breast implants. Dr. Doft says she generally sees two age groups interested in the augmentation procedure. The first group is composed of women in their twenties, and the second includes women in their late thirties or early forties who have had children. “For the first group, I often will discuss with them their plans for having children,” she explains. “If they are getting married and expecting to have children soon, we may delay the placement of breast implants, as the breasts will change during pregnancy. But if a woman is not planning to have children in the near future, there is no need to wait.”

Another consideration? How much breast tissue the patient has. “Pregnancy is less likely to affect a woman with very little breast tissue,” Dr. Doft says.

The Impact of Breastfeeding on Breast Implants

“Contrary to what many women fear, breast implants do not affect your ability to breastfeed when they are placed under the gland and through an incision beneath the breast or through the axilla (arm pit),” Dr. Doft explains. “The implant is inserted beneath the breast tissue and often under the pectoralis muscle, far away from milk ducts.”

For women who had breast implants placed through the areola (i.e. the area around the nipple), Dr. Doft says there is a possibility scar tissue may prevent the development of milk ducts in the area. Even so, the patient would still likely be able to breastfeed — just from less ducts.

While women with silicone implants might be concerned about the quality of their breast milk, Dr. Doft says research has shown there is little to worry about. In [studies comparing formula milk to breast milk](#) from a woman with silicone breast implants, there was more silicon in the formula than the breast milk.

Postpartum Breast Procedures

While pregnancy and breastfeeding should have no impact on the lifespan of breast implants, women may no longer be happy with the appearance of their chest after giving birth.

Heredity, age, number of pregnancies, length of time and frequency of breastfeeding, and weight fluctuations are just a few of the factors that may influence how the breasts heal after childbirth. “Some women find their breasts feel deflated, the same, or larger after pregnancy,” Dr. Doft shares. “Most patients find that their breasts are more ptotic or saggy.”

To correct for any changes, women may consider a mastopexy (a.k.a. [breast lift](#)) to address sagging or an implant replacement to change the size and shape of the breasts. Both procedures work best when performed after a woman is done having children. “If there is a significant amount of sagging, some patients will elect to have a breast lift to better center their breast tissue on the implant,” she says. “Other patients with minimal ptosis may exchange their implant for a slightly larger implant to better fill out the breast skin envelope.”

Patient Perspective

Irene underwent breast augmentation with implants when she was 20 years old because she was self-conscious about her self-described “flat chest.” Since then, Irene has had three children and a breast revision procedure. Here, she shares her experience with being pregnant and breastfeeding with implants.

THE AEDITION: When and why did you undergo your initial breast augmentation?

IRENE:

I underwent breast augmentation at the age of 20. I was always self-conscious of my ‘flat chest’ and was often teased about it. I am a naturally thin person and felt that, with breast implants, I could have more of a womanly figure. My friend Maria had the procedure done, and she looked amazing. I asked her for her doctor and booked my consultation. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I had so much confidence afterwards.

THE AEDITION: What changes to your breasts did you experience during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

IRENE: While pregnant I found that my breasts got bigger, which happens with or without breast implants. During breastfeeding, they became very large, which again also happens with natural breasts. After breastfeeding, I felt my breasts did not go back to what they were pre-pregnancy. I was again self-conscious about this but knew that, after I was done having all my children, I could again undergo breast augmentation to change out my old implants to new ones. I had my second procedure after I had my last child at 30 years old. That's the beauty of plastic surgery. I felt great again and back to my normal self pre-babies!

THE AEDITION: After the changes that come with pregnancy and breastfeeding, were you still happy with the appearance of the implants?

IRENE: I was not happy with all the changes that come with pregnancy and breastfeeding. They were a little more elastic and soft — maybe you could say 'droopy' from all the weight gain and losing it after. I can't necessarily say it was breastfeeding, but I think more of the weight gain and losing it. My implants did not look the way they were pre-kids, but I knew when I was done having children I would have another procedure to fix those changes.

THE AEDITION: Would you have done anything differently?

IRENE: I would not change my decision to get breast implants at a young age because it made me have confidence for all those years. If I had waited, I wouldn't have felt that good. But I would recommend that, if you want to change your implants after you have one baby because they changed, wait until you are done having children to do that. I have three kids, and they changed after each pregnancy. I waited until after my last to have another breast augmentation.

THE AEDITION: What advice would you give someone with implants who is planning to get pregnant or breastfeed in the future?

IRENE: I would say to go for it! I did not see how breast implants could affect breastfeeding at all. I still had a lot of milk, and my babies all breastfed fine with the implants.