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How Breast Implants Have Evolved in the Last 30 Years

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This year is Allure's 30th Anniversary, and we're celebrating by looking back at iconic moments in beauty from the past three decades. You can read more articles like this one [here](#).

To D or not to D? In the early '90s, this was hardly even a question. Bigger was considered better. Women all across America were going up a cup size — or two... or three. But how they were rounding out their chest changed from decade to decade.

With a voluntary moratorium on silicone implants, saline-implant surgeries saw a spike throughout the late '90s and early 2000s. By the time silicone was reapproved by the FDA in the mid-2000s, [breast augmentation](#) had become the most popular cosmetic surgery in the United States. Around the same time, an even more natural-looking generation of silicone implants hit the market. Innovations such as [gummy bear implants](#) were revolutionary; its unique filling (a semi-solid silicone gel that holds its shape) posed minimal risk of migrating outside the shell if it ruptures, Santa Monica-based plastic surgeon [Steven Teitelbaum](#) told *Allure*.

Not only was there a shift toward the natural feel of these newer, innovative implants, but there was also a paradigm shift in the way [plastic surgeons](#) started to approach augmentation: size was no longer the only thing that matters. With new teardrop shapes, implants now started to come in more sizes and widths for surgeons to work with. "We can better choose ones to uniquely fit each body," New York City plastic surgeon [Melissa Doft](#) told *Allure*.

And though a lot has changed in the past 30 years, the popularity of [breast implants](#) certainly haven't: "In the United States, breast augmentation is the most commonly done aesthetic elective surgical procedure, with over 300,000 women a year choosing to have a breast augmentation," says [Adam Kolker](#), a plastic surgeon in New York City.

Here, a look back at the history of breast implants and a glimpse at what's next in this ever-evolving industry.



a dark-skinned model with shimmery hot pink paint across her chest

Hannah Khymych

1992: Pamela Anderson jogs down the *Baywatch* beach, bouncing breast implants into the bigger-is-better arena. The same year a voluntary moratorium on silicone implants is

announced in the U.S., surrounding consumer fears that leaks are leading to systemic illnesses like rheumatoid arthritis.

1996: Saline-implant surgeries have increased 72 percent since 1992, but silicone isn't totally forgotten: Two years later, researchers in the U.S., Denmark, and Sweden find no convincing evidence that silicone leaks cause disease.

2002: Plastic surgery becomes a spectator sport: *Extreme Makeover* brings graphic footage of breast augmentation surgeries to the small screen. And it is far from a deterrent. That year, 249,641 women get implants — that's 147 percent more than five years earlier.

2006: Silicone is back. The FDA grants approval to two silicone implants and manufacturers get to work churning out a new, even more natural-looking generation of them.

2008: For the first time, breast augmentation outranks [liposuction](#) as the most popular form of cosmetic surgery in the United States, with 307,230 procedures performed.

2017: *Allure* reports on a paradigm shift: "Cosmetic breast implants used to have one job: make your breasts bigger. Now shape and proportion, not size alone, are what matter."

2019: Some implants come under scrutiny: The FDA asks for a voluntary recall of [Allergan's textured implants](#) (often used in reconstructive surgeries following mastectomies) because reports indicate a link to anaplastic large cell lymphoma, a rare form of cancer.

2021: Breast augmentation continues to evolve: "I anticipate evolutionary changes in implants and the techniques that we use to place them," says Adam R. Kolker, a plastic surgeon in New York City. For example, a minimally invasive technique for inserting implants through a small incision is in trials in Costa Rica, says Steven Teitelbaum, a plastic surgeon in Santa Monica, so you may be able to have the procedure without general anesthesia.

Now read more about breast implants:

- [The Complete Guide to Breast Augmentation](#)
- [How Breast Augmentation and Liposuction Procedures Are Evolving](#)
- [Why Everyone Is Talking About Breast Implant Safety Right Now](#)

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