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Breast Implant Illness and Explant Surgery: A Comprehensive Guide

Introduction

Breast implant illness (BII) has become a focal point of discussion and concern among individuals with breast implants and the medical community. This condition, characterized by a broad range of systemic symptoms, has led to an increased interest in the potential health risks associated with breast implants and the options available for those affected. This comprehensive guide explores breast implant illness, detailing its symptoms, possible causes, and management strategies, along with the process and benefits of explant surgery and post-operative care.

Understanding Breast Implant Illness

Breast implant illness identifies as a variety of symptoms that can develop after receiving breast implants, affecting multiple systems in the body. Individuals with both silicone and saline breast implants report symptoms that can vary widely in severity and impact. Common symptoms include chronic fatigue, joint and muscle pain, memory and concentration problems, sleep disturbances, hair loss, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety, depression, skin rashes, and breathing difficulties.

The exact cause of breast implant illness remains unknown. Still, researchers are exploring several theories, including autoimmune or inflammatory responses to the implants or reactions to substances that leach from the implant over time.

Diagnosis and Management of BII

Diagnosing BII is challenging due to the need for standardized tests or criteria. Healthcare providers usually consider the diagnosis when they have ruled out other potential causes for the symptoms. Management focuses on alleviating symptoms, as no specific treatment addresses the condition. Explant surgery, the removal of breast implants, has been reported by some individuals to improve symptoms, though outcomes vary.

Explant Surgery: A Solution for Some

For those experiencing symptoms of BII or other complications, explant surgery may be a viable option. This process involves the surgical removal of breast implants and possibly the surrounding scar tissue. Deciding on explant surgery requires careful consideration and consultation with experienced medical professionals.

Steps for Breast Implant Removal

1. **Consultation with a Specialist:** Engage with a plastic surgeon skilled in breast implant removal to discuss your symptoms and desired outcomes.
2. **Understanding the Procedure:** Explant surgery can vary in complexity. A total capsulectomy may be recommended in some cases to address concerns about silicone leakage or BII symptoms.
3. **Preparation and Recovery:** Follow your surgeon's pre-operative instructions and allow for a recovery period, adhering to guidelines for care and follow-up appointments.

The Role of Manual Lymphatic Drainage Post-Explant

Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) is a gentle massage technique that is beneficial after explant surgery. It helps reduce post-surgical swelling and bruising, promotes healing, decreases pain, and may improve the appearance of scars by enhancing lymphatic flow and reducing inflammation. Consulting with a certified lymphatic drainage therapist experienced in post-surgical care is recommended to ensure safe and effective treatment.

Conclusion

Breast implant illness and the decision to undergo explant surgery are significant concerns for individuals with breast implants. Understanding the symptoms, potential causes, and management options, including the benefits of explant surgery and post-operative care like Manual Lymphatic Drainage, is crucial. Awareness, education, and research are vital to improving the well-being of those affected, ensuring informed decisions and optimal health outcomes.



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