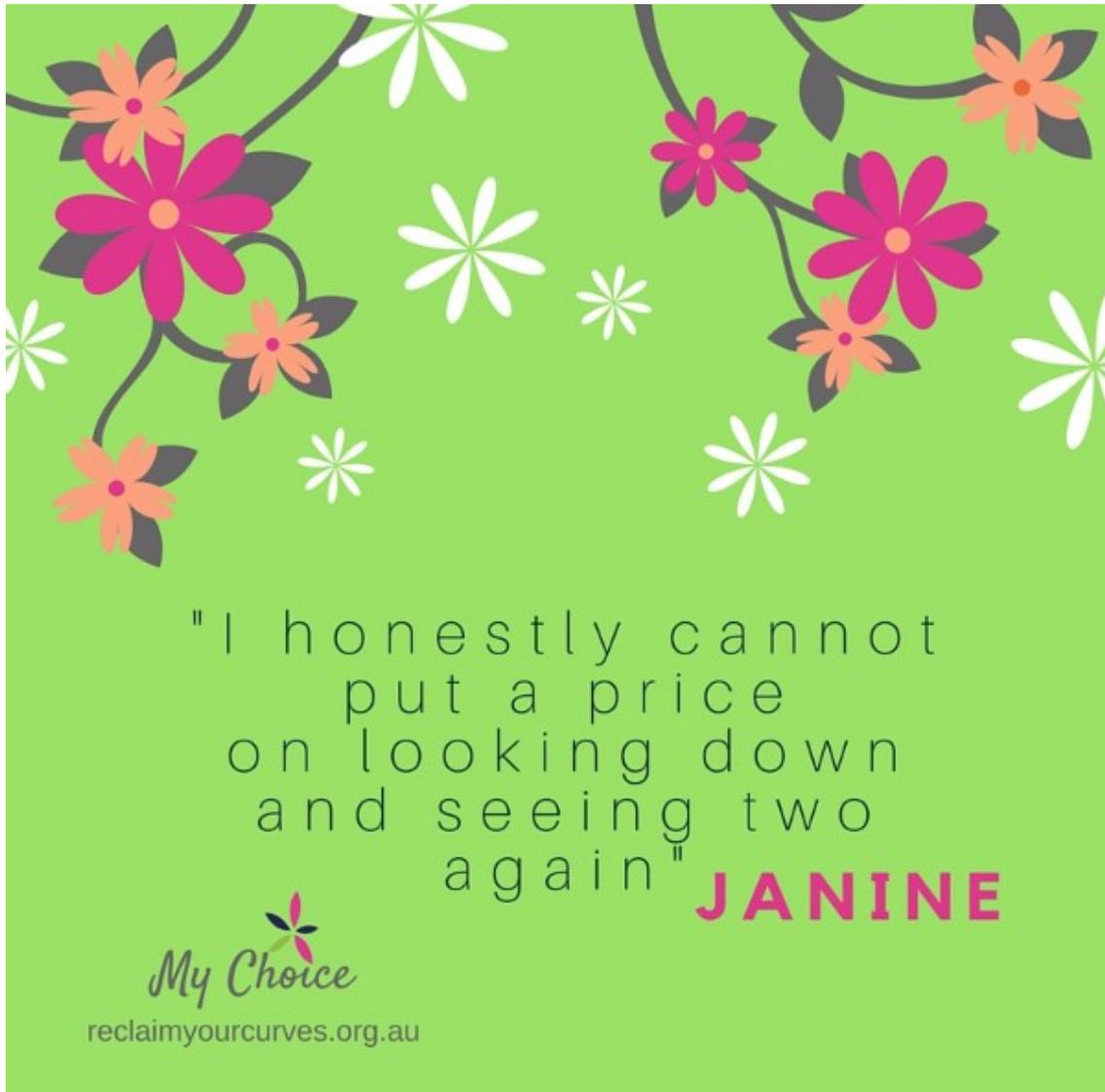


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Reclaim Your Curves E-Newsletter - July 2016

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the inside story



Welcome to our July E-Newsletter

These last few months have been busy. Reclaim Your Curves has been travelling around to different states to continue to raise awareness for the information needs for women facing mastectomy. Last month our Ambassadors in WA attended the **BCNA Breast Cancer Information Forums** in Perth and Brusselton meeting interested women and handing out our information resources.

In **South Australia the Flinders Centre for Innovation held a Breast Cancer Management Seminar** which was an opportunity for Reclaim Your Curves to connect

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women beyond breast cancer. Patients in that area are supremely lucky to have such wonderful healthcare and support.

Remember - **Breast and Surgical Oncology** is carrying out research that patients can get involved in, Improving Breast Reconstruction Equity of Access through Stakeholder Consultation and Translation into policy and practice (I-BREAST), see more details in this Newsletter.

This month we launched the **Your COMMUNITY Forum**, a new online space for **support people** and patients to connect and also for our Ask an Expert feature to have a new home. Since we started our first online community in 2013 it has broken our hearts to turn support people and health professionals away from our online groups which are strictly patients only. This meant their loved ones were unable to reach other women to gain support for their journey. *Read more* in the Get Connected section below.

Additional entries have been made in the Services Directory, there is an easy way to add your business or if you know of one, just visit the website [Suggest a Service](#).

Please enjoy reading more about our activities below.

How to help women find our resources and support:

Like our public [Facebook page](#) or Share our [website](#)

Health Professionals - we have a conveniently sized Postcard Invitation you can order to give to your patients during a consultation or to display in your waiting room.

[Order FREE postcards online](#)

Reclaim Your Curves
Breast Reconstruction
INFORMATION and SUPPORT

Promoting **choice** for women

Breast reconstruction can be an extraordinarily difficult time for many women. With so many decisions to make, it's easy to become overwhelmed and frightened.

This is your invitation to join us at **Reclaim Your Curves,™** a comprehensive online resource to help you understand your options for breast reconstruction. It is a place to meet women on a similar journey, view realistic images and learn what to expect during and after surgery.

www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au

member group of Breast Cancer Network Australia

CoverGirl



Chris's Story

"Well it was nearly 18 months of breast reconstruction but I made it - new beginnings for me in 2016 including a new job. I am stronger and still determined to help others to take those steps. I can't believe it was 2 years ago. "

Read about Chris and view other Personal Stories here [Members page](#)

Latest news and Conversations

[Finding your reconstructive breast surgeon](#)

One of the most important relationships you will have during your breast reconstruction procedures is with your reconstructive breast surgeon. Your reconstruction may take place over many months or even years, you might have several revisions and nips and tucks until you have achieved the result you want to consider yourself complete. Because of this it is important to have a good relationship where you can be comfortable and honest, able to discuss the good, the bad and the ugly as you proceed throughout your surgeries.

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One woman's experience with Aeroform

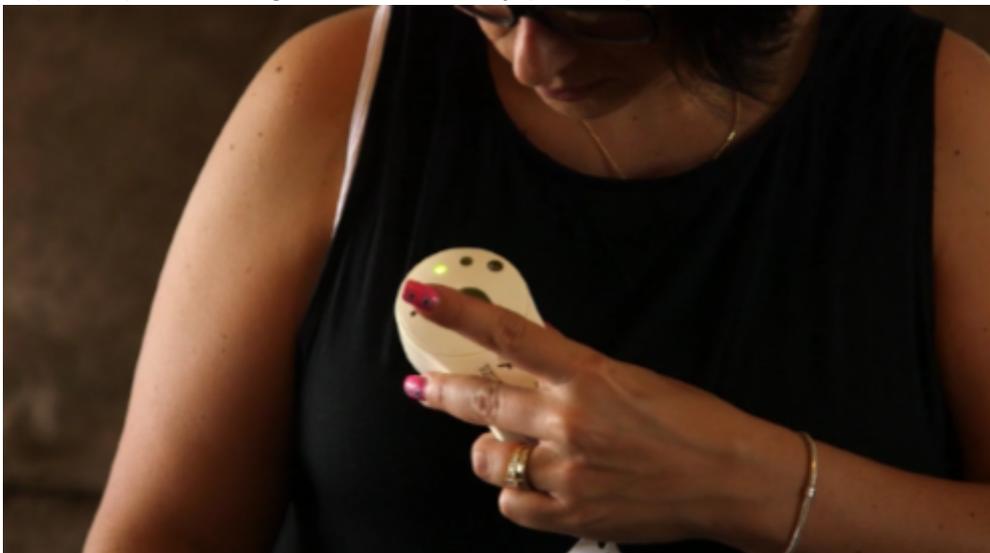
This is a beautiful personal story of one woman's experience. For women wondering about the differences between Aeroform gas tissue expanders and saline tissue expanders then this short video might be of interest.

When Tracy Posner underwent a bilateral prophylactic mastectomy in December 2015, she had the unique experience of having one AeroForm® tissue expander and one saline expander.

As a busy mom of two kids, Tracy found the convenience of the self-led tissue expansion provided by AeroForm® to be the preferable choice. She's able to fill her tissue expander in the comfort of her own bedroom or bathroom, instead of having to travel to her doctor's office.

Read More

<http://airxandersblog.com/mastectomy-patient-prefers-aeroform/>



Sex after reconstruction

There are many stages of adjustment after undergoing a mastectomy and

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love can heal these wounds.

See also from the website - [Adjusting to the new you](#)



Research



Are you interested to know what research is currently taking place that relates to breast reconstruction or if you are keen to get involved read on....

Improving Breast Reconstruction Equity of Access through Stakeholder Consultation and Translation into Policy and Practice (I-BREAST)

A four-year comparative case study. Previous research has demonstrated the

Who can participate?

Women who have personal experience with breast cancer treatment and specifically who wanted to have breast reconstruction but have had trouble accessing breast reconstruction.

[Invitation to Participate](#)

Dr Kathy Flitcroft

Clinical Trails Manager

Breast and Surgical Oncology

kathy.flitcroft@melanoma.org.au

[Learn more about Breast reconstruction related research](#)

Events



Reclaim Your Curves Peer Support Lunches

Perth, Sydney and Central Coast have recently had lunch dates where women meet to connect and share with each other about their breast reconstruction experiences. Conversation covers many topics as you would expect whenever you gather women together....look out for upcoming events [on our website...scroll to bottom](#)



Central Coast Girls hanging out at the July lunch



Perth girls meet at Herdsman Lake Tavern in Wembly with Chris the Medical Tattooist

Breast Reconstruction Awareness Events



BCNA Information Forum Perth and Brusselton

Last month the amazing [Leone Parmenter](#) and [Paula Gaunt](#) represented Reclaim Your Curves at the WA Breast Cancer Network Australia Information Forums. Thank you ladies for sharing the love and spreading the information literally across Australia in support of women facing mastectomy.

Women attending the forum could meet Leone and Paula to speak about their breast reconstruction experiences, pick up a variety of fact sheets and learn ways to connect with others travelling this part of the journey towards recovery from breast cancer.

BCNA Information Forums are a wonderful way for women diagnosed with breast cancer to find information and support from a variety of organisations. Find out more about upcoming forums here <https://www.bcna.org.au/news-eve.../events/information-forums/>



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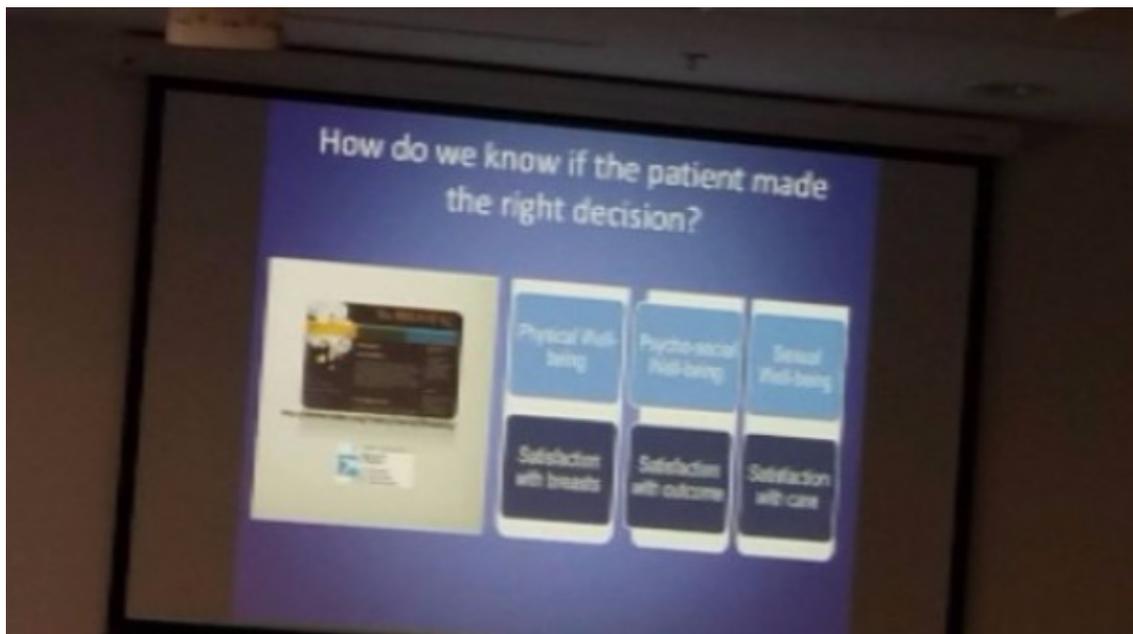
This month we had the privilege to attend the Breast Cancer Management Seminar at Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide. The program included Breast Anatomy, Nursing, Management of the Axilla in the morning then Patient Decision in Breast Reconstruction, Whats New in Breast Reconstruction, Outcomes for Women with High BMI and Measuring Outcomes. The program included personal stories with our own Chris Horsell delivering an emotive presentation of her experience with breast cancer and breast reconstruction.

The seminar was attended by approximately 100 local health professionals in the field of breast health including nursing and surgical.

It was wonderful and encouraging to see so much consideration for the ongoing quality of life for women facing mastectomy and the high quality of care that women are receiving in the City of Adelaide.

We have made some excellent contacts for future collaboration and have spread the word about Reclaim Your Curves for connecting patients with each other.

Also exhibiting at the seminar were Burnside Plaza Lingerie - Adelaide, the Encore Program and Mentor Breast Products.

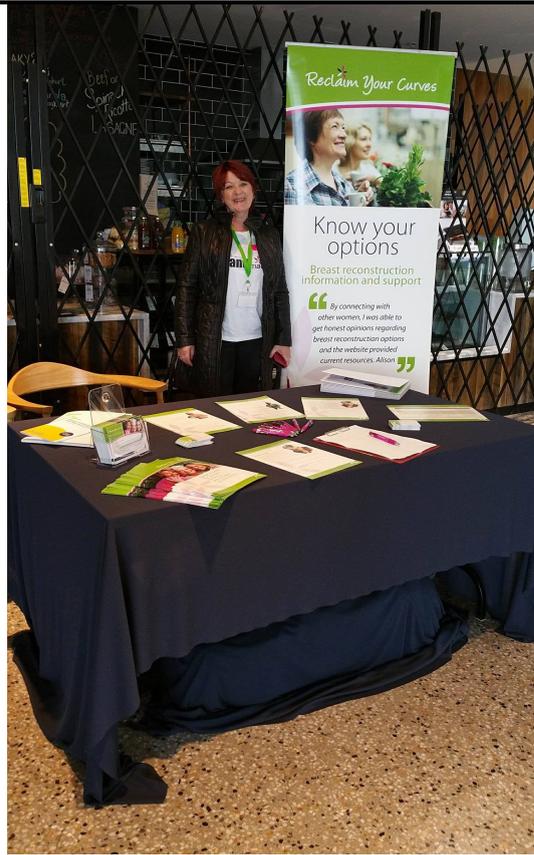


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Services Directory

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[Service Directory - Nipple and breast tattooing](#)

This is where you will find providers of nipple tattooing in some locations in Victoria, ACT and NSW. We need many more, please let us know your contacts for this service.



[Service Directory - Bra fitting, breast prosthesis and lingerie](#)

This is where you will find bra and prosthesis retailers from all over Australia. Including some retailers of beautiful lingerie made especially for the breast cancer survivor.



[Service Directory - Physical health and well being](#)

There are some wonderfully supportive therapies and services for breast cancer survivors and to assist with the recovery from breast surgery. Find some here, if you know more we would love to know about them.



Connecting with women with experience gives you practical insight in the surgical and recovery period that anyone who has not been there simply cannot describe. For many women joining a support group, either face to face or online, is a great way to exchange stories and images. Some ladies like the opportunity to touch a “real fake” breast to judge for themselves how that might feel for them.

There are 3 ways to Get Connected

- Face to face
- Online
- On the Phone

NEW - Your COMMUNITY Forum

Your COMMUNITY Forum is a NEW moderated online forum for women and their support people to ask questions and give and gain support throughout the reconstruction journey. This forum is open for partners, mothers, daughters and others involved in the journey. **Anyone can read the posts but registration is required to participate.**

How is this forum different?

This forum is especially helpful for support people. Until now our online communities have been strictly patients only. But this new forum is a place that family members can ask questions on behalf of their loved one. Perhaps mum is not tech savy and unable to participate online herself. This forum is a perfect place to ask questions on her behalf.

In this forum anyone can ask a general question and ask question directly to participating health professionals via Ask an Expert.

Go to the [Connect](#) page on the website so read more and find the contact that suits you.

Print resources

Download or order stock [here](#)



Choosing your surgeon

TOP 10 TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR RECONSTRUCTIVE BREAST SURGEON

- Member of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) or is appropriately skilled in the procedure being performed.** - This is important to ensure you have an appropriately qualified specialist plastic surgeon to undertake your procedure.
- Approachable** - It's great to have a surgeon who you feel comfortable asking questions of, where no question is a silly one, and who is happy to discuss your fears and concerns.
- Makes you feel like part of the decision making** - Being offered options is an important part of decision making however not everyone has this luxury due to their specific situation. A good surgeon asks you questions, listens and helps you to make informed decisions and gives you information and helps you see the different possibilities. They take the time to ensure everything gets covered rather than being rushed.
- Contactable** - One of the most valuable things you can have is a direct line to our surgeon, whether this is by phone or email. A surgeon who offers their email or mobile number understands you might have further questions or might need to be in touch during out of office periods over the months or years of your relationship.
- Considerate and respectful** - It's just so nice when your doctor remembers your name, either in their office or at the bedside. A good surgeon will listen to your concerns and attempt to allay fears while offering realistic outcomes. It's extra good if they consider the potential financial burden of procedures, but that they do not make assumptions about your ability or willingness to pay.
- Dedicated** - If most of these points are a yes, then your surgeon is committed to you as a patient. Many surgeons will visit you personally bedside post-surgery but this isn't always possible and often it's someone from their team.
- Sense of humour and smiles** - A surgeon who smiles and can have a laugh helps to keep things relaxed. Surgery and appointments can be emotional, so this trait can help to break that composed and formal atmosphere that can make you feel intimidated.
- Confident** - You want a surgeon who is confident and reassuring, especially if things stray from the plan. You need to be able to trust your surgeon that he or she as the capability to get things corrected and back on track.
- Skilled and experienced** - Your surgeon should be able to show you several pictures of their work. Ask to see images of their work and if they have any patients willing to speak to you about their surgery and outcomes.
- Works in a team and consults with colleagues** - Many surgeons work as part of a multi-disciplinary team where they discuss cases to make the best judgement in consultation with colleagues.



For more information go to www.reclaimyourcurves.org.au

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Invest in Yourself

PREPARING FOR SURGERY

No one else needs to invest in your reconstruction surgery to the extent that you do. You are living with the outcome for the rest of your life, so it is important to bring what you want and need into the consultation. Not everyone is comfortable having these conversations and even the strongest of us can feel intimidated when in the surgeon's office getting caught up in the flurry of jargon, drawings and measurements. It's common to just agree with the surgeon so that you can get out the door and back to some sense of control. A good way to overcome this anxiety is to go to your appointments well prepared with the materials and information you have gathered from reputable sources such as the Reclaim Your Curves. Bring in a list of questions to ask and a pad and pen to jot things down. Some ladies have said it is empowering to go armed with information, even if you don't need it. Another good tip is to tell your surgeon that you are nervous and unsure, and this can sometimes slow the conversation down a bit and help the surgeon to understand where you are at.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON

One way to get the right answers for your situation is to understand the right questions to ask. Getting to know the language and terminology used in reconstruction will help you to make informed decisions and to get the responses you need. Members of the Reclaim Your Curves online community have shared the following hot tips to get the answers you need at your appointment.

PRE SURGERY QUESTIONS

- Am I a candidate for an immediate skin/ripple sparing breast reconstruction at the time of mastectomy?
- How quickly do I need to decide about my options? Do I have time to wait a little longer to be sure I have thought over my options?
- What factors impact on the timing of my breast reconstruction?
- It may not be possible to have a skin/ripple sparing breast reconstruction. If this surgery isn't to make it worse, or might it be improved?
- What are the specific steps in each stage of the procedure you have recommended for me? What are the risks related to each stage?
- What's the projected timeline for each stage? How flexible is this timeline?
- What are the options for my other breast? How and when is contralateral surgery recommended / done? What are the advantages/ disadvantages and risks?
- Am I able to keep my own nipples? If not, what are the options, and when do I need to make any decisions regarding that?
- If my nipples are saved, will I have sensation/feeling in them? What will they look like?
- How will reconstruction affect my skin sensation?
- Where will the incisions be made on my breasts and my tissue donor area?
- What do you recommend to manage scars post-surgery?

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Better choices for women thinking about breast reconstruction.

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Preparation & recovery

PREPARING FOR SURGERY

Smoking increases the potential for serious risks. It is advised that you plan to give up smoking and any nicotine therapy at least 2 months before surgery.

- You may be advised to stop taking certain medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), aspirin, or other aspirin-like medications that may interfere with blood clotting for a brief period before your surgery. You may also be asked to stop taking naturalistic substances such as garlic, ginkgo, ginseng and St John's Wort, as they may affect clotting and anaesthesia. Be sure to tell your surgeon and anaesthetist everything you are taking and take their advice before stopping any medication.
- Avoid excessive alcohol prior to surgery.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, including plenty of foods rich in vitamin C, which may help promote tissue healing.
- Exercise regularly to build energy, improve fitness and maintain strength.
- Ready your home, including preparing food and rearranging furniture if necessary.
- If necessary, arrange for someone to take care of your children while you are in the hospital.
- Make sure a relative or friend will drive you to and from the hospital. You will not be able to drive for a few weeks and should only consider doing so when you have healed sufficiently.
- You should not be alone for at least 24 hours after you arrive home.
- Arrange for help with shopping, housework and caring for any small children as you will be unable to do any heavy lifting or strenuous activity for several weeks.



RECOVERY TIPS & ADVICE

Your surgeon will provide you with advice on caring for your new breast, when you can shower or bathe, as well as how to look after any drains that are still in place. Drainage tubes remove fluids that collect in the surgical site. The drainage tubes remain in place until the amount of fluid draining substantially decreases.

If you have had a tissue expander inserted, you will need to see your doctor regularly over several weeks or months to have the expander filled until the desired shape and size have been achieved for the implant. A support bra may be worn to help reduce swelling and support the reconstructed breast.

You may be prescribed painkillers, antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs when you are first discharged from hospital. It is vital to use these as prescribed to successfully manage any pain and to reduce the risk of infection.

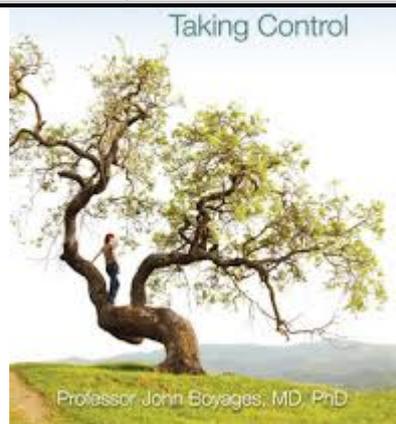
Post-operative recovery can take longer if complications occur, so it is important to get adequate rest, make sure you follow your surgeon's directions and exercise within the limits of comfort - if you feel any pain or pulling, especially around the wound sites, stop. It is normal to feel tired and sore after your surgery. Generally it is advised not to swim, play sports, exercise or do any heavy lifting for at least two weeks after your surgery. There is no set rule when it comes to your recovery time. Your Specialist Plastic Surgeon will prepare detailed instructions on post-operative care - make sure you follow these carefully.

It can take up to twelve months to completely heal and for scars to fade and for you to get a good indication of how your new breast will settle into your body. You might feel further surgery to refine the shape of your new breast mound

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Special offers

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NEW
SPECIAL BOOK OFFER
for Reclaim Your Curves registered members

Professor John Boyages has offered his book "Breast Cancer - Taking Control" at a discounted price.

Available on Amazon and iTunes for immediate download. For full terms and conditions see www.bcpublish.com and click on privacy.

- [Amazon - Breast Cancer Taking Control](#)
- [iTunes - Breast Cancer Taking Control](#)

or, if in Australia, have one of John's books couriered to your door and receive free delivery and \$5.00 off the book.
 Use promotion code: **"curves"**

WHAT DOES RECLAIM YOUR CURVES DO?

We are a group of volunteer consumers who have had breast cancer and breast reconstruction. We recognise how difficult this journey is, even beyond surgery and we work to help inform and support women undergoing these life changing surgeries.

Our current activities include:

- Facilitation of the BCNA Breast Reconstruction Online Group
- Online community managing Reclaim Your Curves closed Facebook group: *We have 2 online communities with 5 volunteers facilitators working every day to connect new people and to help members find the information they need.*
- Developing and facilitating face to face support groups around Australia. *Currently we have groups in Perth WA, Melbourne VIC, Brisbane QLD, Central Coast NSW, and Sydney NSW.*
- Our Ambassadors actively promote Reclaim Your Curves to health professionals and breast cancer support organisations through one on one meetings and presentations. We encourage health professionals to participate in the Postcard Invitation Program which assists women to find our information website and the support of others.
- Development of the clinical online information and fact sheets
- Research daily for current news and information relevant for Australian women, this information is brought to you through [Latest News](#) on our website and through our [Facebook PAGE](#)

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WHY IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP IMPORTANT?

One of the most influential aspects of Reclaim Your Curves is the number of members we have in our communities. This is our evidence that information and support for breast reconstruction is in demand by the women who need it. We are growing steadily everyday, our current membership includes:

Current member registrations 1,838

(an increase of 93 on the previous month)

We are a fledgling organisation but with your membership we can all help make a difference to women reclaiming their curves after breast cancer.

[Follow us](#)[Visit us](#)[Share](#)[Forward](#)

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Contact us:

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