

More choices for implants

No matter what her reasons are for having breast implant surgery, a woman now can choose which type of implant she'd prefer to have – silicone or saline.

That wasn't true until November, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, after reviewing years of study data on the safety of "gel" implants, released them for use in both breast cancer reconstruction patients as well as cosmetic, breast enhancement patients.

Silicone implants had previously come under scrutiny in 1992 because of concerns over implants rupturing and causing health problems, such as autoimmune and vascular diseases and cancer. The recent studies have shown no relationship between "gel" implants and these diseases.

No science supported these claims and studies found no link, yet the FDA restricted the use of silicone implants for 14 years, says Dr. Therese K. White, a partner

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with Plastic & Hand Surgical Associates.

Now they're back for general use, and better to boot, she says. The newer generation of silicone implants is more cohesively designed so that even if an implant were to rupture, the gel is now more solid than



Dr. Therese K. White, a partner with Plastic & Hand Surgical Associates, notes that the newer silicone filled implants have been improved in the past few years. (Merry Farnum photo)

liquid and will hold its shape and stay put.

"Having the choice is a significant change," says White.

"I don't think a silicone-filled implant is the right choice for every woman, but it's a nice option to offer."

Some women tend to like the texture and feel of silicone implants better, but there are downsides to using them. For example, saline implants are deflated when inserted into a breast pocket, then filled with saline, so they require a much smaller incision.

With silicone implants, an incision must be made large enough to accommodate the mass of the implant.

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The government is

developing guidelines related to follow-up checks for women who elect to use silicone implants for cosmetic surgeries. Reconstructive surgery patients with silicone implants already follow similar guidelines.

"I'm curious to see how many people will actually choose silicone now that they can," says White.

Cosmetic breast surgery has remained popular throughout the years of implant controversy. Consultation with any of the surgeons at Plastic and Hand will help guide you through the choices. These surgeries are performed at Plastic & Hand's WADSC as day surgery procedures. Recovery varies from person to person and depends upon the type of procedure but typically is from one to two weeks for initial healing.