

# Dr. Scott J. Engel

## Surgeon

To commemorate National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we asked Dr. Scott J. Engel, a board-certified plastic surgeon at Sarasota Plastic Surgery Center, to enlighten us about breast reconstruction.

### **What different types of breast reconstruction surgery are available after a mastectomy?**

A reconstructive surgeon might work with the patient's own body tissue, an implant, or a combination of both. When using an implant, the surgeon must often place a temporary saline expander to stretch out the tissue before replacing it with a more permanent implant. Reconstruction of the nipple and areola is the next step. These procedures reflect different options available to the surgeon. The raw materials may change. But rebuilding the breast in the most natural form possible is always the surgeon's goal.



### **How soon after breast cancer surgery can breast reconstruction start?**

It can begin immediately. When it does, it actually decreases the amount of additional surgeries required. Sadly, a large percentage of patients aren't given the option to pursue immediate reconstruction due to the lack of coordination between surgeons. This is absolutely unacceptable.

### **Who is a good candidate for this procedure?**

Any healthy woman with realistic expectations can undergo breast reconstruction. Factors like age, medical co-morbidities and the need for other cancer treatments are always taken into consideration.

### **Many younger women at high risk of breast cancer are choosing to have prophylactic mastectomies before cancer develops. Do you recommend this?**

Not as a blanket statement, no. It's a question of risk — and that depends on the individual. Prophylactic mastectomies are generally reserved for women with a strong family history of breast cancer who test positive for the BRCA gene. A woman who fits this description should consult a geneticist, a surgeon and an oncologist before making a decision. But many women don't know where they stand. Every woman should know what her level of risk is before she makes that choice. That's my recommendation.

### **Do you recommend that all women who have mastectomies consider reconstruction?**

The loss of a woman's breast can have dramatic effects on a woman's mental and physical health. All healthy women should consider reconstruction. Some women opt to undergo breast conservation, which often entails postoperative radiation with the belief that the result will be more pleasing. Depending on the amount of breast tissue present, the results may be more pleasing with a complete mastectomy.