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Breast Cancer Surgery Breakthrough

Traditionally, women whose breast cancers have been treated with lumpectomies (surgical removal of the tumor, leaving the rest of the breast intact) often had to either live with a breast marred by the procedure...or plan for reconstructive breast surgery in the future.

Good news: An innovative new approach enables women undergoing lumpectomy to receive cosmetic repair at the same time. The result is a more attractive, natural-looking breast—right away. Called *oncoplastic surgery*, this technique combines oncology surgery (treatment of cancer) and plastic surgery (reconstruction of the breast).



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How it's done: Using a technique called the “advancement flap,” the surgeon moves or rotates replacement tissue from the same breast, without detaching it from the original blood supply. While the result is a somewhat smaller breast, the doctor can immediately reshape the other to match so there's no need for further surgery. Usually the patient ends up with a breast lift—a silver lining of sorts. This technique eliminates the need to use implants or relocate tissue from another part of the body.

Who it's for: Oncoplastic surgery is an alternative for many breast cancer patients, even small-breasted women who may otherwise have required mastectomy. Also, this approach is particularly advantageous in treating a noninvasive cancer called *ductal carcinoma in situ* (DCIS). This refers to cancer that does not migrate outside the ducts and into the breast tissue, and comprises about 20% of diagnosed breast cancers today. DCIS radiates from the nipple and may be distributed throughout the ductal system, and can necessitate removal of a substantial amount of breast tissue.

Important: This is a new and emerging technique, and only a limited number of surgeons in this country have experience with it. To learn more or find a physician who performs this innovative surgery, consult with a fellowship-trained breast surgeon or someone whose practice is 100% breast surgery, since he/she is apt to be most current in breast surgery advances.

Bottom Line/Women's Health interviewed Laura A. Klein, MD, director of breast surgical oncology at St. Barnabus Hospital and an instructor in clinical surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, both in New York City. Dr. Klein is one of the few surgeons trained in oncoplastic surgery and is an innovator in its continued development.