

Virtually scarless breast reconstruction



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Doctors perform surgery (file photo) (AP)

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL--At one time it was common for women to have a radical mastectomy for breast cancer with the potential for terrible scarring. There have been tremendous strides made in breast reconstruction in recent years.

Two years ago, in July 2007, 38 year old Cheri DePietro received news that she was BRCA 2 positive - she had a gene mutation which drastically increased the chance that she would develop cancer.

Cheri DePietro, patient: "My mother had died at the age of 50, as well as her sister had died at the age of 50 of breast cancer. I found out basically that my 3 options were to be closely monitored, take tamoxifen, or to have reconstructive double mastectomy."

Cheri decided to have the double mastectomy and began a nationwide search for a doctor to perform breast reconstruction. That led her to Dr. Hilton Becker, a board certified plastic surgeon in Boca Raton who is the inventor of a remarkable new adjustable breast implant which has allowed him to pioneer a unique new method of one stage scarless reconstruction.

Dr. Hilton Becker, Bd. Certified Plastic Surgeon: "Recently surgeons are doing less and less mastectomies. They're now doing what's called a skin sparing mastectomy where they do an incision around the areola take out all the breast tissue, and we can gather that circular incision up like a purse string and that's how reconstruction is done...in many cases there is no visible scar. The device that I developed is a one stage tissue expander. It's a tissue expander and breast implant in one.

"So you see this is what it looks like after the surgery has been performed. The surgeon has saved the skin, the muscle has been saved. The muscle is release, the implant is placed, partially filled, the muscle is sutured with a deliberate gap to expand the implant through this injection port. The tissues can be stretched. The tissues are overstretched and volume is reduced and once we achieve the right size and shape the fill tube is removed and the nipple areola is reconstructed over the scar. So that there is virtually no visible scar."

Cheri: "I'm very happy about my physical appearance and I'll tell you that my relief about cancer has just been tremendously lifted off."