

PARKER'S ONLY MONTHLY COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

# SEARCH PARKER *Magazine*

*Women's  
Health Issue*

# FOCUS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

## It's not too late for reconstruction

BY DR CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS



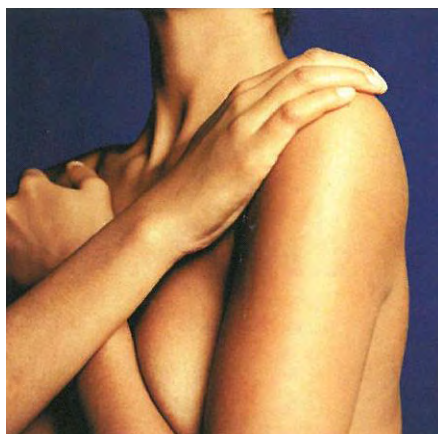
**B**reast cancer is a diagnosis that stirs up emotions that surround concepts like sense of self-identity, "womanhood," femininity, sensuality, bodily integrity and loss that few cancers do. Breast cancer strikes at the core of what our culture has spent years teaching us about what is "important" about being a woman. It also brings back memories of heroic struggles that loved ones won and lost and perhaps images of scars and deformities left by the surgeons who treated those loved ones.

Recent data states that 1 out of 9 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. The American Cancer Society states that about 182,400 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. While breast cancer survivor stories are becoming more the norm these days, still approximately 40,480 brave women will lose their lives from the disease this year.

Breast cancer treatment continues to evolve as more information is learned and more scientific studies are performed. Detection is improving; chemotherapy is improving; radiation techniques are maturing; and breast-conservation surgery is being emphasized. Many women are appropriate candidates for "less surgery" by performing lumpectomies and sentinel lymph node biopsies combined with radiation therapy instead of the radical mastectomies of years ago. However, the mastectomy (removal of all the breast tissue), in one form or other, is still an important and reliable technique for many women diagnosed with breast cancer and those women who have genetically high risks for

developing breast cancer.

The American Society of Plastic Surgery data indicates that approximately 93,000 breasts were reconstructed after a mastectomy in 2010. Despite the seemingly high number, recent data suggest that 70% of women get NO reconstruction after mastectomy and that only 3 out of 10 women are fully educated about reconstructive options after mastectomy.



Many women develop a healthy body image and effectively "move on" after a mastectomy. These women may not desire reconstruction of the breast. Unfortunately, many women suffer significant psychological or functional loss after the physical loss of a breast(s). Many of these women would be good candidates for reconstruction.

There are many women, mothers, and wives who have had their breast or breasts removed that don't know that their breast can be effectively reconstructed even decades later. A breast can be reconstructed the same day when it is removed or anytime afterwards as long as the patient's health is reasonable and there are no other contraindications.

Techniques for reconstruction are best discussed by Board Certified Plastic Surgeons with extensive expertise in this field. Techniques include the use of saline or silicone implants or moving a portion of the woman's body from one area and placing it on the chest. Newer techniques of moving fat and skin from the abdomen include muscle-sparing techniques such as the Deep Inferior Epigastric Artery (DIEP) flap which uses a woman's abdominal fat and skin to build a new breast(s) while preserving the woman's underlying abdominal muscles. Some lay people call this a "Tummy-Tuck Flap." While not exactly like a tummy-tuck, the procedure can provide some of the same benefits while providing a life-long, natural breast reconstruction. This technique can be an excellent option for women after radiation therapy to the chest wall and can be done anytime after a mastectomy as long as there is no contraindication such as poor health.

Putting back the broken pieces of the lives affected by breast cancer can often involve some type of breast reconstruction to restore a woman's feelings of wholeness, self, femininity, and sensuality.

Park Meadows Cosmetic Surgery and its two Plastic Surgeons, Dr. Christopher Williams and Dr. Jeremy Williams, have teamed up with Sky Ridge Hospital to provide a sophisticated, high-volume breast reconstruction practice to help breast cancer patients rebuild their broken pieces even years after their treatment. For more information or to schedule a consultation to find out more about reconstruction, please call (303) 706-1100.