

FACING BREAST CANCER

NEW HOPE FOR COLORADO WOMEN

For the past two decades, October has reminded us that the women in our lives face a formidable opponent as it relates to women's health, breast cancer. With a new woman being diagnosed with breast cancer every 3 minutes we all recognize that breast cancer deserves our attention year round.

Women are more aware than ever about the importance in performing self-breast exams and undergoing screening mammograms. Many women touched by this disease understand their options with regard to the surgical and medical treatments, but many women still do not understand their options when it comes to breast reconstruction. In fact, over 80% of women nationwide will NOT undergo reconstruction after breast cancer. There are a variety of factors that impact this decision, but lack of education regarding these options tops the list.

October brought our family face to face with breast cancer when my own mother was diagnosed. As a plastic surgeon, I have always been aware of the reality of breast cancer as I treat women seeking breast reconstruction. Many options regarding breast reconstruction are available to the women of Colorado, but there are certain types of reconstructive procedures that have not been available

in our state, forcing women to travel outside Colorado to seek these state-of-the-art procedures.

Breast reconstruction can be performed using a breast implant or by using a woman's own tissues. Common procedures include the TRAM (Transverse Rectus Abdominus Myocutaneous Flap), which uses the skin, fat and muscles from the lower abdomen (tummy tuck region) to reconstruct the breast. Unfortunately, the muscle sacrifice can lead to permanent abdominal weakness and bulges. Most women in Colorado will be offered, and receive, an implant breast reconstruction, which is a perfectly acceptable way to reconstruct the breast.

However, women in Colorado have not had a "full menu" from which to choose when evaluating breast reconstructive options. Unlike an implant, a woman's own tissue will last forever, and is better able to recapitulate the look and feel of a natural breast. And, when the muscles can be spared, it provides a wonderful option for

many women seeking breast reconstruction after breast cancer.

These state-of-the-art forms of reconstruction use a woman's own tissue, but do NOT sacrifice the underlying muscles. These procedures take ONLY the excess skin and fat from areas such as the lower abdomen or buttock region leaving the underlying musculature intact and functional. When the skin and fat is taken from the lower abdomen, the woman essentially receives a "tummy tuck", an added benefit!

Until this November, these state-of-the-art forms of breast reconstruction required women to travel hundreds or thousands of miles out of state to have their breast reconstruction performed. With the addition of Dr. Christopher Williams to our practice at Park Meadows Cosmetic Surgery, we are excited to be able to provide these cutting edge procedures to the women of Colorado. Though these procedures may not be appropriate for every woman seeking breast reconstruction, it is important to understand all options as they relate to breast reconstruction. Education is the cornerstone of understanding these options.

As we move beyond October and breast cancer awareness month, it is important for women to remain engaged in the activities that have led to early detection including self exam and screening mammography. Though it is impossible to fully discuss all options relating to breast reconstruction in a brief article, we hope that every woman will become familiar with the options now available in Colorado for breast reconstruction.

Dr. Chris Williams and Dr. Jeremy Williams offer a full spectrum of cosmetic and reconstructive procedures in their Lone Tree, Colorado office.

More information can be obtained via their website at parkmeadowscosmeticsurgery.com ■

