

# Resources for After a Mastectomy or Lumpectomy

## What are breast prostheses?

Breast prostheses can be referred to as breast forms and they are designed to look and feel like natural breast tissue. They can be made of foam, fibrefill or weighted silicone and can fit inside the pocket of a mastectomy bra. Weighted silicone prostheses may help offset problems associated with balance and posture.

## When should you purchase?

It is best to purchase your prosthetic when your incision and chest wall are well-healed following surgery and radiation therapy (check to see if benefit providers require a more specific timeframe). Discuss your needs with your doctor and ask about a prescription for your prostheses, mastectomy brassiere and other required medical supplies.

## What other supplies might you need?

- Post-surgical supplies such as temporary brassiere after surgery, lymphedema arm sleeve, glove or gauntlet
- Mastectomy brassiere (bra)
- Interim cotton forms – these may be available free from the Canadian Cancer Society call toll-free 1.888-939-3333
- To adapt your existing bras - online instructions are available online search your browser for “adapting your bra after a mastectomy”

## Where to purchase products covered by PharmaCare

Go to an approved supplier who is a certified prosthetist, and/or fitter at an approved site. Ask your supplier if they enrolled with PharmaCare or call Health Insurance BC to confirm the supplier's status. From Vancouver, call 604-683-7151. From the rest of B.C., call toll-free 1-800-663-7100. **Internet purchases are not covered by PharmaCare.**

## Does Pharmacare cover the costs?

- First you must be registered with Fair PharmaCare. Go to Fair Pharmacare and check status or register.
- PharmaCare provides coverage subject to PharmaCare criteria, including any deductible requirements.
- If the cost is over \$400 pre-approval is required from Pharmacare before purchase.

- Send in a copy of your receipt(s) noting your personal health card number to PharmaCare (P.O. Box 9655 Station Provincial Government, Victoria BC, V8W 9P2)

## What does Pharmacare Cover?

- *Breast prostheses*: Maximum \$450 each mastectomy or maximum \$350 each lumpectomy every two years or end of manufacturer's warranty
- *Lymphedema arm sleeves*: two per mastectomy, per year (no pre-approval needed for costs above \$400)
- *Glove or gauntlets* for lymphedema arm sleeves: two per mastectomy per year (max. \$150 for off-the-shelf products and \$300 for custom-fit products)

## What if you need more assistance?

- Contact the Breast Prosthesis Bank at the Canadian Cancer Society in Vancouver call toll-free 1-888-939-3333. They also offer reconditioned mastectomy bras.
- If you are receiving benefits through the Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Ministry of Child and Family Development, Veterans Affairs or First Nations Health Authority enquire about any additional coverage.
- Other benefits may be available from Extended Health plans or other government agencies.

## What is not covered?

Backup items, lost or stolen products or devices or those covered by another government program insurer.

## If you have extended benefits

Contact your extended benefits provider to see if they will cover any costs.

## First Nations

Contact First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) for guidance and information. You will need to take your medical assessment and go to an authorized retailer to be fitted for your prostheses and medical supplies. The retailer will first submit a request for pre-authorization. If you are unsure which retailer is authorized call toll-free 1-800-317-7878. It may take up to two weeks for preauthorization and the retailer will submit their bill for payment.

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<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/practical-support>