

“I feel like a new woman”

I feel like a new woman!

Many of us long for bigger boobs, but large breasts can make life a misery. Alison Thurston went under the knife to go down four bra sizes. Here's her account of what surgery is really like...

woman came up to me and smiled, saying, "I used to be like you..." Instantly I knew she'd had a breast reduction! She told me it was the best thing she'd ever done and gave me a number for the Surgical Advisory Service. Back at home, I plucked up the courage and finally made that call...

2 September 1997 My consultation

I arrived at the Surgical Advisory Service centre in Harley Street and was told that surgery would mean swapping big breasts for smaller breasts with scars. I had to go home and draw red felt-tip lines on my breasts to see what scars would look like. But my mind was made up.

That evening, I went for a meal with my husband Chris and told him I wanted surgery. He'd always tried to dissuade me whenever I mentioned the op. But he knew how much I wanted it and was totally supportive.

I went back to Harley Street to meet my surgeon,

Mr Prakash. He examined me and said the weight of my breasts had caused a slight curvature of the spine, which made it easier for me to justify the surgery.

When Mr Prakash asked what size boobs I wanted, I replied, "Two fried eggs, please!" But he said 38C/D would be right and told me to buy some sports bras in that size. He said surgery involved removing fatty tissue and re-siting my nipples. It cost £3200 but I felt it was time I did something for me.

We set a date for surgery in three weeks' time and Mr Prakash told me to take iron tablets, a mineral supplement and to cut out alcohol. But even giving up red wine was worth it when I was about to make my life-long dream come true.

25 September 1997 My surgery

Everyone was amazed by how calm I was in the weeks before the operation. On the big day, I felt fine kissing

Chris goodbye when he dropped me off at the station to catch a train to London. But when I arrived at the Highgate Hospital at 1pm for my 5pm op, I was told it had been postponed until 9pm. I instantly turned into a nervous wreck!

I kept thinking of my son Matthew and my sister Sharon who'd begged me not to have surgery as they were

Top: before the op
Bottom: eight weeks after surgery the scars are barely noticeable



Above: Alison on holiday in 1994. Right: today, with smaller boobs, she's more confident and happier

frightened for me. I nearly walked out of the clinic. But I kept reminding myself this was what I wanted.

During the three-hour operation, about a kilo of fat – the same weight as a bag of sugar – was removed from each breast.

September-October 1997 My recovery

I woke up after the operation feeling a tightness across my chest but it wasn't painful, just uncomfortable. Immediately I peeked under the sheet and was thrilled at the new, flatter me! I had tight gauze bandages across my chest with my 38 C/D Marks & Spencer sports bra on top.

The first thing I did was struggle out of bed to weigh myself – I was 5lb lighter! When the bandages were taken off, my breasts were bruised and swollen. – I couldn't bear to look at them!

I stayed in for another night and Chris picked me up the next morning. He did a double-take at my chest and said there was nothing there! I was elated that at 46, I'd finally done it.

January 1998 My progress four months after surgery

For the first two weeks, my breasts were tender and swollen. My nipples were extremely sensitive. Chris had to wash my hair because I



couldn't lift my arms above my head and couldn't do any housework. I had to wear my bra day and night.

I slept propped up against pillows instead of my usual position lying on my tummy – I used to flop my breasts on either side of me like rudders! I took the odd painkiller and rubbed Vitamin E into my boobs every day to reduce scarring.

By the third week, I had more energy. The bruising had faded, but my breasts felt hard and looked like footballs. But Mr Prakash assured me they'd settle into a more breast-like shape.

Chris was scared to touch my boobs in case he hurt me. When we had sex for the first time since the operation, after about four weeks, I felt very protective of my breasts and couldn't relax properly.

I went back to work after a month and treated myself

to a new trouser suit. Before the surgery, I took a size 20 on top and a size 16 on the bottom – now I'm a size 16 all over. Everyone stared at my chest – but for once I didn't mind! My friends all said I'd acquired the boobs of a 16-year-old!

My scars have healed amazingly well, you can hardly see the vertical lines running down from my nipples. The scars underneath are still tender and my left nipple is numb. I can't exercise for six months to make sure I've healed internally.

Now I feel so much more confident. At last I'm free of the mental and physical burden that cast a shadow over my life. My only regret is that I didn't do it 20 years ago.

As told to Carol Dye
● Alison Thurston's breast reduction was provided by The Surgical Advisory Service. Tel: 0171-637 3110