

A New Approach to Post-Cancer Breast Reconstructive Surgery

Fat grafting combined with abdominal etching gives women confidence after cancer

BY JOANNA NARVAEZ

The last thing Rachele Duchatelier expected to hear from her doctor when she went for a routine gynecological exam was that she had a lump in one of her breasts. At 38 years old, breast cancer was the furthest thing from her mind. She had no family history of the disease and was feeling fine; but that day would change her life.

After having a mammogram performed, Rachele received the news that she, indeed, had cancer in her left breast.

"It was at that moment that I said to myself, I will be the survivor," says Rachele. "Fortunately, I was able to catch this early and avoid chemotherapy and radiation."

Oncologists told Rachele they would have to surgically remove 70% of her left breast. However, wanting to avoid any further risks, Rachele decided to have a double mastectomy, a surgical procedure undergone by women who have been diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer to remove both the cancerous breast and the healthy breast to avoid cancer developing in the remaining breast later on.

According to a study published in JAMA Surgery, nearly half of women diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer consider having a double mastectomy and one in six – about 17% – follow through with the surgery.

For Rachele, it was peace of mind and her then 18-year old son that motivated her to go this route.

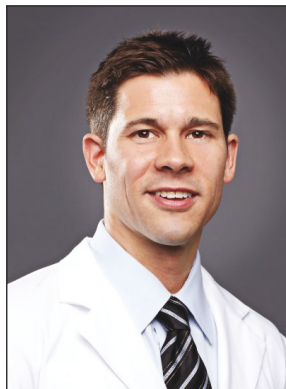
"I didn't want to have to wear a prosthetic bra," says Rachele. "I wanted to turn a negative situation into a positive one."

Like most if not all women who experience a double mastectomy, Rachele then underwent reconstructive breast implant surgery. However, the initial procedure she had was not done correctly.

"My breasts came out uneven and were hurting. It turns out one of my implants had flipped over," said Rachele.

It was at that point that a friend who had gone through her own breast cancer journey recommended that Rachele visit Dr. Joshua Lampert, reconstructive and plastic surgeon in Aventura, Florida.

Dr. Lampert was able to utilize a distinct and innovative procedure called fat grafting to help reconstruct Rachele's breasts. In this approach, fat is harvested and pulled from other areas of the patient's body such as the stomach, thighs, arms, and love handles to help recreate the breasts to look and feel as



Dr. Joshua Lampert,
reconstructive and plastic
surgeon in Aventura, Florida.

natural as possible.

"The one thing many patients like about fat grafting is that the fat harvest site often allows for body contouring similar to liposuction," said Dr. Lampert. "Unlike some other reconstructive procedures, the fat donor site often looks better afterwards."

"The fat is artistically injected into the areas of soft tissue that we want to add volume to," Dr. Lampert explained. "It is also very useful to inject the fat under scar depressions after tumor excision surgery."

"Out of all the doctors I had spoken to before I found Dr. Lampert, none of them were able to do the fat transfer to the breasts," said Rachele. "With him, I saw that I had the possibility to have my breasts look good as I grew older. Regaining that self confidence and being happy with the way I looked was important to me after everything I had experienced."

Rachele was able to harvest fat from her abdominal area in order to recreate her breasts. Since Dr. Lampert was already working in that area, he offered Rachele the opportunity to also undergo abdominal etching. This allows for the abdominal area to be sculpted to enhance the appearance of one's waistline and create "six-pack" abdominal muscles.

"Abdominal etching is actually a very simple procedure to perform, especially for someone like Rachele since we were already working in that area anyway," said Dr. Lampert. "With abdominal etching, we remove fat deposits in an advanced and strategic way to mold and shape the abdominal wall so that your ab muscles look more prominent."

"I am someone who likes to exercise so the etching, for me, was just a plus," said Rachele. "It was something exciting for me to look forward to and another way to help me feel like I was looking my best after having gone through breast cancer."

Rachele underwent three surgeries to correct her prior botched implant surgery, undergo the fat grafting, injecting of fat to create natural-looking breasts, and the abdominal etching.

"My recovery time was optimal. I was able to return to work within three weeks," says Rachele. "I am so grateful that I found Dr. Lampert who was not only able to give me a better body than when I started but, more importantly, the confidence to live the life that was given back to me."

For more information about Dr. Joshua Lampert, call (786) 735-9275 or visit lampertmd.com.