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## Breast implant warning

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**Breast augmentation remains the most popular cosmetic procedure for women around the globe, but that popularity is being overshadowed by its dangers.**

CONSUMER

The worldwide recall of French-made toxic silicone implants, and the arrest of its company's founder, have made headlines around the world.

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This negative publicity has meant greater attention is now being paid to the other potential risks of the procedure, which were previously played down.

Now women are taking the drastic steps of undergoing 'explant surgery'.

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Lynne Hays was 35 when she underwent her first round of surgery to implant two saline filled prosthetic breasts.

"The surgeon that I chose preferred saline at that stage, and I was extremely happy with the implants," Hays said.

But it wasn't long before her attitude changed. Her implants lost their shape, and sagged after breastfeeding.

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The mother of two had them removed and replaced with silicone filled implants.

"In a matter of weeks I had 'double bubble', which is a two-tiered effect where you've got your breast tissue, and then another roll, and the implant is visible," Hays said.

In constant fear her implants could be killing her, Bec Walski, like tens of thousands of Australian women, underwent explant surgery to have them removed.

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"As the doctor was removing the implant, he found it was ruptured, so that the implant leaked into my lymph nodes and other areas," Walski said.

Making matters worse, it was a French PIP implant - the one at the centre of a worldwide recall.

"They took out the original PIP implants, they changed them with a new type of implant, and that's where I am today," Walski said.

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She didn't know at the time, but the new implant was another PIP. She now wants it gone because PIP is accused of using non-medical industrial grade silicone gel in tens of thousands of its products which, when ruptured, spills toxic chemicals into a patient's body.

It is estimated 8,900 Australian women have received silicone filled prosthesis made by French company Poly Implant Prothese, but exact numbers are not known because a mandatory register doesn't exist.

"It is an opt in, not an opt out system. We are hoping there will be introduced a mandatory system, which is absolutely every patient with an implant has to be registered. This is a similar system they are using with the orthopaedic devices at the moment," Dr Paul Belt, a member of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons said.

"It is your right as a patient to know exactly what device was used in you, so you should contact your surgeon as a first point of call," Dr Belt said.

Dr Belt sees a steady number of women preparing to undergo revision surgery to remove or replace implants.

"These are not lifelong devices. They have the potential to fail, and it is important at ten years that they have an ultrasound, and check if they have ruptured. If they have, we recommend they are removed."

Judy Williams underwent explant surgery in 1992 to remove implants she received in 1981.

She says she's testament to the fact breast augmentation isn't permanent, and she wants other women to understand the possible complications.

"I was very fortunate. I had a GP who said 'I've got a gut feeling that I think you should have them taken out'. My rule was the old rule of engineering - if it ain't broke don't fix it," Williams said.

But despite scans and mammograms, which didn't reveal any abnormalities, her implants ruptured, and 30 years on she still suffers from chronic illness.

"I have known a lot of people who've had implants, and have had ruptured implants, and ongoing health problems. Again not provable, but anecdotally there's a lot out there," Williams said.

Such is the demand for information and support for women who want their explants removed, Hays now runs an online forum and web support group for women all around the world.

"I wanted to share my story because people are afraid, it's a taboo subject. It's all okay to walk down the street and you know ogle people's boobs, but no one wants to know the other side of that story, when things do go wrong - and they can go wrong."

**This reporter is on Twitter at [@DamienHansen7](#)**

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- Dr Paul Belt - [www.paulbelt.com.au](http://www.paulbelt.com.au)
- Breast Implant Advice - [www.explantinfo.com](http://www.explantinfo.com)

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