

# Jenna's Wish for Breast Implants: Instructor Guide

## Title

Jenna's Wish for Breast Implants

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## Discipline

Women's Studies, Psychology

## Target Audience

Intermediate, Women's Studies and Psychology majors

## Keywords

Breast augmentation, breast implants, cosmetic surgery, women and beauty

## Length of Time/Staging

One to three hours (60-90 minutes if not combined with video)

## Abstract

15-year old Jenna believes that breast implants are the secret to a successful future. She has asked, and her parents have agreed, to pay for implants as a gift for her 16th birthday. Should she



have the implants? This problem examines whether students believe Jenna should proceed with the implants by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of breast implants (including the medical complications) reasons why women pursue cosmetic surgery, and how the thinking about increases in self-esteem are tied to women's value as a beauty figure.

## **Date Submitted**

1/17/2002

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5/15/2002

## **Format of Delivery**

Start with a 20-30 minute mini-lecture to introduce the topic, then show the video on "Breast Implants: the \$4 Billion Question," followed by students working in small groups to answer questions. After questions are completed, reassemble as full group to share answers.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

1. To understand and articulate the pros and cons of elective breast implants (not related to postoperative surgery with mastectomy).
2. To delineate the potential medical risks and complications.
3. To understand the role that society's emphasis on female beauty may play in the decision to have implants.
4. To practice oral communication skills.
5. To develop or further refine skills in collaborative work with other students.

## **Student Resources**

1. [FDA Consumer Handbook on Breast Implants](#)
2. [BS Frontline Breast Implants on Trial](#)
3. [National Academies Info for Women About the Safety of Breast implants](#)
4. [British Independent Review Group Report on Silicone Gel Breast implants](#)
5. [Breast Augmentation and Breast Implants](#)
6. Brown, S., Pennello, G., Berg, W., Soo, M, & Middleton, M. (2001). Silicone gel breast implant rupture, extracapsular silicone, and health status in a population of women. *Journal of Rheumatology*, 28 (5), 996-1003.
7. Zimmerman, S.M. (1998). *Silicone survivors*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
8. Vanderford, M.L. & Smith, D.H. (1996). *The silicone breast implant story: Communication and uncertainty*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
9. Weitz, R. (Ed.) (1998). *The politics of women's bodies: Sexuality, appearance and behavior*. NY: Oxford University Press.

## **Instructor Resources**

All student resources listed, plus:



Liscum, B. (Producer & Writer), Amons, N. (Producer & Writer), Byron, S. (Director). (1995). Breast implants: The 4 billion dollar question. Princeton, N.J.: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 1995.

Sher, E. (Producer & Director). (2000). Younger, thinner, smoother [videorecording]. Berkeley, CA: University of California Extension Center for Media and Independent Learning.

Cosmetic surgery: Risks and benefits. (1995). A presentation of WKRC-TV and Medstar Communications, Inc. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

## **Author's Teaching Notes**

My primary goal for this exercise is not to impose my opinions nor choice, but to have each student consider for themselves why this procedure is considered or completed by some women. Since it is possible that a student in class may have had or knows of someone who had the procedure, I think it is important to kindly and gently introduce this as a planned topic prior to the time in class when this exercise will be completed. On the first day of class when reviewing the syllabus, I tactfully point out that we will be examining several issues that are sensitive and may produce heightened emotions. I explain to students in class that I am very respectful of each individual's choices and I am conscious of the sensitive nature of the material. I also asked that anyone who might have concerns see me after class or contact me via office hours, phone, or email. Also, it is important that the instructor view all websites given to students; some contain graphic photos, and many of the websites appear biased against implants. This might prompt the instructor to strategize with students about looking for information that is supported by research, as well as viewing sites that are both pro and con.

If groups of students can use laptops in class, some time can be devoted to researching various websites for information. If groups presentations are planned, students can create their presentation on the laptop and then present their responses directly from their laptop.

## **Assessment Strategies**

The assessment may depend on how much time and detail is apportioned to this exercise. In my class, the group-completed answers will count for 10% of their course grade. Grade is determined by:

1. completeness of answers, providing thorough responses for why or why not;
2. grammatical accuracy;
3. coherent writing. Instructors may also wish to have students complete a peer evaluation form that can be factored in to the grade as well.

## **Solution Notes**

Because of the sensitive nature of this topic, I recommend a whole group discussion to share responses and answers to the questions. A detailed list of health problems related to breast implants can be found on p. 122 of Vanderford & Smith's book listed above.