



## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON

Information courtesy of: [www.flatclosurenow.org](http://www.flatclosurenow.org)

**In finding a surgeon to perform a unilateral or bilateral mastectomy, we highly suggest asking the following questions:**

### **How many breast surgeries do you do in a given week, month, or year?**

There are no cut-and-dry rules about how many breast surgeries are enough. But, as a rough guideline, one expert tells us “a busy breast surgeon probably sees about 150 cancers per year. A moderately busy breast surgeon sees in the 80 to 120 range. And anything less than 30 a year is considered low volume.

### **What proportion of your practice is breast related?**

We recommend finding a surgeon whose work is nearly or entirely breast related.

### **How much experience do you have in flat closure?**

Not every breast surgeon has a lot of experience with flat closure. Even fellowship-trained breast surgeons may not be experienced with flat closure because the focus is often on lumpectomies and reconstruction. Make sure your surgeon has experience. Ask for photos of their work.

### **What techniques do you use to handle redundant tissue? Another way of putting this is to ask, “what’s your plan to ensure I’m not left with dog ears?”**

The surgeon should be able to answer this question easily. If the surgeon is dismissive or defensive, that is a red flag. A good answer is a specific answer. For instance, a confident surgeon will tell you exactly how he/she approaches an incision to avoid dog ears. Listen for phrases like “fishtail incision” or VY-plasty.

### **Are you a member of the American Society of Breast Surgeons or the Society of Surgical Oncology?**

Finding a surgeon who is a member of one of these organizations will increase your odds of a successful outcome because it shows they are interested in learning new techniques and staying on top of developments in the field. Of course, it’s not a guarantee, but it’s worth asking.

**If you are heavysset or have very large breasts it's worth asking even more detailed questions such as:**

- Operating room tables allow for the surgeon to sit the patient up during the procedure. Will you sit me up during surgery to see how the skin is draping?
- Do you mark the patient's body preoperatively to note where to remove excess skin?