

Breast Implant Illness: Symptoms, Risks & What Women Should Know

Summary: Breast Implant Illness (BII) is linked to fatigue, inflammation, immune dysfunction, and cancer risk. Learn symptoms, causes, and FDA warnings.

Breast implants are often marketed as safe, routine medical devices—but growing awareness suggests a more complex reality. **Breast Implant Illness (BII)** is a term used by patients and clinicians to describe a wide range of systemic symptoms that some women experience after receiving breast implants.

As Susan E. Kolb, MD, author of *The Naked Truth About Breast Implants: From Harm to Healing*, states, “There is no such thing as a completely safe breast implant.”¹ Understanding the potential risks empowers women to make informed decisions about their health.

What Is Breast Implant Illness (BII)?

Breast Implant Illness is **not yet an official medical diagnosis**, but it is widely recognized by patients, surgeons, and researchers as a collection of symptoms that may be associated with breast implants—both **silicone and saline**.

Women reporting BII commonly describe symptoms such as:

- Chronic fatigue
- Anxiety, depression, or panic attacks
- Joint and muscle pain
- Brain fog and memory issues
- Rashes and skin sensitivities
- Recurrent infections
- Fibromyalgia-like symptoms
- Heart palpitations
- Autoimmune or inflammatory conditions

How Breast Implants May Affect the Body

According to research summarized by clinicians studying BII, breast implants may impact the body in several ways:

Chronic Inflammatory Response

Breast implants are **foreign bodies**, and their presence can stimulate a persistent immune response. Chronic inflammation is increasingly associated with autoimmune conditions and long-term health concerns.

“Gel Bleed” and Chemical Exposure

All implant shells are made of **silicone**, which is **semi-permeable**. Over time, implants may release silicone particles, heavy metals, and chemical compounds into surrounding tissues—a process often referred to as *gel bleed*.

Biofilm and Bacterial Growth

Many implants develop **biofilms**—thin layers of bacteria that adhere to the implant surface. These bacteria can release toxins that may disrupt immune function.

Oxidative Stress

Implants may oxidize within the body, contributing to **oxidative stress**, a known driver of inflammation and cellular damage.

Are Saline Breast Implants Safer?

Saline implants are often perceived as safer, but they still have **silicone shells** and include **valves** that may allow microorganisms to enter the implant. These microorganisms can form biofilms and release toxins that affect the body systemically.

In other words, **saline implants are not risk-free alternatives**.

Breast Implants and Cancer Risk

The FDA has confirmed a link between breast implants and **Breast Implant–Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL)**—a rare cancer of the immune system.²

Real Stories, Real Impact

Many women report that they were unaware their symptoms could be linked to their implants until years later.

“I lost my health and nearly died from my breast implants.”

- Client, The Thermogram Center

Support communities such as **Healing Breast Implant Illness** on Facebook include tens of thousands of women sharing experiences related to symptoms, explant surgery, recovery, detoxification, and healing.

What Are the Options?

Explant Surgery

For women experiencing symptoms, **complete explantation**—removal of the implants *and* the surrounding capsule and biofilm—may be considered. Outcomes often depend on the experience of the surgeon.

Alternatives to Implants

One alternative to synthetic implants is **autologous fat transfer**, which uses a woman’s own fat tissue (commonly from the abdomen or hips) to augment the breasts—without introducing foreign materials.

Key Takeaways

Breast implants—whether silicone or saline—may pose **systemic health risks** for some women. Symptoms of Breast Implant Illness can begin shortly after implantation or develop gradually over years, making them difficult to recognize.

If you have implants and are experiencing unexplained symptoms, consider discussing concerns with a **qualified healthcare provider** and reviewing FDA guidance.

Awareness saves lives. Sharing information helps women make informed choices.

¹ Kilb, S. The Naked Truth About Breast Implants: From Harm to Healing. Lighthouse Publishing; 2009. <https://a.co/d/oaJIQb1l>

² Food & Drug Administration. Questions and Answers about Breast Implant-Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL). Breast implants. 2026. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/breast-implants/questions-and-answers-about-breast-implant-associated-anaplastic-large-cell-lymphoma-bia-alcl>