

Media Release

The Hon Martin Foley MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality



Monday, 10 May 2021

VICTORIANS WARNED OF BREAST IMPLANT CANCER RISK

Victorians who have undergone breast implant or breast reconstructive procedures in Australia or overseas are being encouraged to watch for early symptoms of a rare form of cancer targeting the immune system.

Sixteen Victorians have now been diagnosed with Breast Implant-Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL) connected to surgeries dating back to 2004.

The chance of developing this rare form of cancer is low and depending on the type of implant the risk ranges from one in 2500 for the most highly textured implants, to one 1 in 83,000 for the less graded textured implants.

The risk in highly textured implants is around 23 times greater than for smooth implants.

On average, the cancer is diagnosed eight years after surgery, but symptoms can arise anywhere between three and 14 years after surgery.

People who have had surgery – for either clinical or cosmetic purposes – should regularly check their breasts for lumps or unexplained swelling on one side. Patients should see their doctor immediately if they notice anything has changed, as the cancer is highly curable if diagnosed and treated early.

Removing the implants is not recommended as the risk of undergoing surgery could be higher than the risk of developing the cancer.

If anyone is concerned or needs more information they should contact the Victorian patient line on (03) 9902 0077 during business hours Monday to Friday, see their GP or visit the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) BIA-ALCL consumer hub website: tga.gov.au/hubs/breast-implants.

Anyone considering breast implants should talk to their surgeon about the associated risks and which implants are considered safer.

The TGA has suspended the use of a number of breast implants and tissue expanders, following an investigation into their link with BIA-ALCL.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Martin Foley

“While the chance of developing this rare form of cancer is low, it is important Victorians who have undergone breast implant or breast reconstructive surgery monitor for early symptoms.”

“Anyone considering breast implants should talk to their surgeon about the associated risks and which implants are considered safer.”

Quotes attributable to Women’s Health Ambassador Pauline Richards

“Safer Care Victoria has engaged with GPs and surgeons to ensure they are aware of this rare cancer, as traditional breast cancer screening and tests such as mammograms do not detect it.”

“Anyone who is concerned or needs extra information should call the Victorians patient line during business hours Monday to Friday or speak to their GP.”

Media contact: Harry Adam 0448 505 876 | harry.adam@minstaff.vic.gov.au