

Breast Health and BDSM

Introduction

In honor of [National Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#), we present this post on “Breast Health and BDSM”.



The purpose of this article is to provide some information about BDSM and breast health and mitigating possible risks. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to take the place of seeking the help of a qualified medical professional. Please realize that very little information is available based on research with BDSM directly, so links between research and BDSM activities are being extrapolated based on the similarity of the action as opposed to being an exact match.

Basic Composition of Breast Tissue

Breasts are composed of a variety of tissue types with the amounts of each type being individual both from person to person and changing through the lifecycle of the person. The

actual breast tissue (for all genders) contains glandular, fatty and fibrous tissue types. Younger breast tissue tends to be denser due to the higher amount of glandular tissue and stronger fibrous tissue, while in older females the glandular tissue is gradually replaced by fatty tissue and the connective tissue begins to break down.[1] Fatty tissue has less blood and oxygen flow than other types of breast tissue. As the composition of the breasts change and the age of the person increases, the body will require longer amounts of time to heal from trauma, while the lasting effects of trauma can occur in less time.

The lymph glands and nodes in this area are referred to as the Internal Mammary Chain (on the medial or sternal side of the breast) and the External Mammary Chain (on the lateral or armpit side of the breast).[2] The lymphatic system is part of the body's immune system. Lymph nodes make infection fighting, white blood cells as the body recognizes the need for healing. The lymph fluid also helps to remove waste from the body. Lymphatic flow is always towards the neck, not a continuous loop.

The nipple is a bit different from the tissue discussed above. The nipple is the outlet for many ducts. The erection of the nipples is actually created by small smooth muscles that are part of your autonomic nervous system.

Conditions Impacting Breast Health and Suggestions for Working with Them

Breast Cancer

Both males and females can contract various forms of breast cancer. Females have a higher risk of breast cancer, but males tend to have a higher mortality rate from breast cancer.

For survivors of breast cancer, understanding the increased risks is important for both the Top and bottom. The list below is not meant to cover every possible risk, but instead to increase awareness of some of the more common complications and suggestions of ways to decrease adverse effects of play.

Lymphedema

If lymph nodes have been biopsied or removed the survivor is at a lifetime risk for lymphedema (although the risk diminishes at the 1 and 3 year marks, it does not ever fully go away) [3]

- **Nothing constricting on that side of the torso or arm.**
 - Use a padded cuff instead of rope.
 - Learn more about the lymphatic system to get a better idea of the area affecting you/your partner.
- **Avoid abrasions and cuts.**
 - Use a glove or other covering to protect the skin of the hand.
 - Wear a sleeve to protect the skin of the arm and underarm.
 - Treat any break of the skin with the precautions needed to reduce the risk of infection.
- **Keep the affected side arm in a position that reduces stress on it.**
 - Use an external support to reduce the muscle usage (if possible) when the arm is being kept in a raised position.
 - Be creative with positioning – you can restrain a

limb without putting it in a compromising position.

- **Avoid prolonged immobilization of the arm on the affected side.**
 - When possible, make that limb the last one immobilized and the first released.
 - Use a kitchen timer or alarm to monitor the length of time – it's easy to lose track of time in a scene.
- **Start extremely conservatively and build up very gradually.**
 - Duration
 - Intensity
 - Effort
- **Heat can increase the pooling of lymph.**
 - Avoid wax play on that side of the torso/back and arm.
 - Avoid fire play on that side of the torso/back and arm.
 - Watch the temperature of the play space.
- **Cold can decrease the flow of lymph.**
 - Avoid ice use on that side of the torso / back / arm.
 - Watch the temperature of the play space.
- **Know the symptoms of lymphedema and monitor for them after play. [4]**
 - Allow at least 72 hours between play sessions to allow the body to repair and recover from stress before playing again – even if it's a different type of play.
 - Only play to a level of intensity that the survivor is cleared by his/her medical professional to exercise at.
- **If the Top is the survivor, it's not just the big actions (like flogging, whipping or caning) that matter.**
 - Risk of rope burn/abrasion while tying.
 - Supporting of your bottom in and out of a

- suspension.
- Holding tension on the rope while tying.
- Risk of cuts with needle, staples, knife play etc.
- Risk of burns with fire and wax play.
- Effort involved in moving equipment, furniture etc.
- Amount and duration of effort if playing with take-downs, grappling / pinning your partner in place.

Axillary Web Syndrome or Cording

Cording is a potential problem after lymph nodes are disrupted. [5]

- Symptoms
 - Tightness in the arm, often restricting the range of motion.
 - A tight cord or multiple cords develop along the arm.
 - Movement of the arm can cause a feeling of tearing.
 - Avoid positions that increase the tension of the cords.
- Precede play with a gentle mobilization / stretching series that you have learned from a qualified therapist.
- Seek out treatment from a qualified manual therapist who can often help to reduce the tissue restrictions.
- Work within a comfortable range of motion.

Nerve Damage from Surgery or Radiation



- Pain may not be a reliable indicator of potential damage.
- Use multiple methods of check in to reduce risk.
- Know what nerve is damaged.
 - What is its sensory function (if any)?
 - What is its motor function (if any)?

Reduced Range of Motion (Frozen Shoulder / Adhesive Capsulitis)

- Immobilize arm in front of the body instead of behind.
- Use a combination of cuff and rope to partially offload the weight in the joint.
- Keep range of motion to a place that does not cause spasm or cause muscular gripping.
- Think asymmetrically.
- Play with rotation of the arm, joint angles of the wrist and elbow to intensify restriction or sensation with shorter levers which can offload the shoulder joint.
- Get creative with predicament positions.
- Follow the guidelines for reducing lymphedema risk when nodes have been disturbed.

General

- Avoid restrictions of the remaining breast tissue.
- Other restrictions will depend on the reconstruction and scar tissue issues that are present.

Breast Augmentation / Reconstruction (non cancer related)

- Healing times and “durability” will vary depending on some of the following issues: Where are the surgical scars – under breast, up to nipple, around areola, through armpit, etc?
 - Are the implants on top or under the pectoralis

- muscle?
- Silicone, soybean oil, saline, gummy bear implants?
 - How old are the implants?
 - Have the implants shifted (beyond the regular drop that occurs)?
 - Scar tissue issues.

Fatty Necrosis of Breast Tissue

Breast tissue can develop necrosis from trauma and surgical procedures – with restrictive binding and impact being similar to trauma to the tissue. As the breast composition skews towards the higher fat makeup, vs. glandular and connective tissues, the breast has a harder time fully recovering. **Once a tissue is deprived of oxygen or blood**



circulation for a long enough period of time, the tissue can die. Fat necrosis in the breast will sometimes show up relatively quickly after the tissue experiences trauma, but has also shown to have been delayed in appearing for up to 10 years.[6]

Necrotic tissue often shows up in the breast as lumps. It is important to get all lumps checked by a medical professional. It is also important for women to re-assess their risk for tissue damage as they age, go through menopause and/or have surgical procedures. Restrictions that cause the breast to turn blue / purple / dark red are probably causing deprivation of oxygen and impeded blood flow. Impact creating bruising can be considered traumatic to the body. Each individual's body has different limits, what might not cause any long term

effect to one person can be causing harm to another.

Closing

This article was written for www.limitsunleashed.com by soumise. soumise is not a medical professional, but has extensive training in breast cancer rehabilitation, exercise physiology, anatomy and biomechanics. She presents on health and wellness topics both in and outside of the lifestyle.

Sources

1. – <http://imaginis.com/breast-health-non-cancerous/breast-anatomy-and-physiology>
2. – http://clinicalgate.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/B9780323046770500098_gr-s0-7.jpg
3. – <http://lymphaticnetwork.org/living-with-lymphedema/lymphedema/>
4. – <http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/lymphedema/signs>
5. – http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/side_effects/aws
6. – <http://radiopaedia.org/articles/fat-necrosis-of-the-breast>

-soumise

Copyright 2015, Limits Unleashed, LLC