

# Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) Breast Implants

## What is the issue with PIP implants?

In December 2011, it was widely reported in the news that concerns had been raised about breast implants made by the French company PIP.

The concerns centred around the silicone used in the breast implants – reported to be substandard industrial-grade silicone which is up to ten times cheaper than the silicone officially authorised for breast implants. It followed the death from cancer of a French woman with PIP implants.

PIP, which made 100,000 breast implants a year and were used globally, came under suspicion after a high number of leaks and ruptures were reported. The French medical device regulatory authority, Afssaps, has suspended the marketing and use of PIP implants.

## I think I might have PIP implants – what should I do?

If you are concerned you should first check your medical notes – these can be obtained from the clinic where you had your surgery or from your GP. If your notes state that you have PIP implants you should request an appointment with the private clinic where you had the surgery.

If your private clinic no longer exists, refuses to help or your surgery was with the NHS you should make an appointment with your GP.

Your doctor will discuss your concerns and the options available to you and if advised you will be sent for a scan.

## What is the NHS offering?

If you had your PIP implants inserted by the NHS, they will be writing to you to tell you that if you are concerned you should make an appointment to speak to your GP who will be able to check your medical notes and take further action, including a referral to the surgical team who carried out the original implant if necessary.

The NHS has also stated that it will:

- Where appropriate and agreed examine by imaging to see if there is any evidence that the implant has ruptured.
- Support removal of PIP implants if, informed by an assessment of clinical need, risk or the impact of unresolved concerns, a woman with her doctor decides that it is right to do so.
- Replace implants if the original operation was done by the NHS.

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## **I got my implants fitted privately – will the clinic replace them?**

95% of the 40,000 women in the UK with PIP implants had them fitted at a private clinic. The following clinics have stated that they will replace the implants at no cost to the patient where it is deemed clinically necessary:

- Holly House
- Highgate Hospitals
- Make Yourself Amazing
- Ramsay Health Care
- BMI Healthcare
- Nuffield Healthcare
- HCA International
- Spire Healthcare

However The Harley Medical Group has stated that they will not provide ultrasound scans to their patients to check for rupture.

If you were a patient of a private clinic which no longer exists, or the clinic where you had the procedure is refusing to help, the Department of Health has confirmed that the NHS will take out ruptured implants at no cost to the patient. You should contact your GP to discuss this option.

The NHS will remove private clinic implants but will only replace them where it is clinically necessary.

## **What are the signs that I might have a rupture?**

You should seek medical advice from your GP or clinic and request a medical review if you have any of the following symptoms:

- lumpiness of the breast
- lumpiness or swelling in the area around the breast
- change in shape of the breast
- deflation of the breast
- redness
- tenderness of the breast
- swelling of the breast
- pain or sensitivity

## **I have an appointment for medical review and I think I need surgery to remove my implants – is there anything I should know?**

If you have an appointment with a private clinic you should ask the following:

- Whether your symptoms are attributable to the implants and request that they perform and fund an ultrasound scan to check for rupture of the implants.
- Whether the implants are of reasonable quality.
- To cover the costs of any potential removal and replacement needed.

If you are due to have your implants removed, you should ask for them to be retained.

If you decide either now or in the future, to pursue a claim for compensation, the implants will be important evidence.

If the clinic refuses because they may be contaminated you should ask them to follow the Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) guidelines with respect to decontamination of the implants.

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## Finding help and support

There are a number of websites that provide information and support to women who may have PIP breast implants.

- Department of Health

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

- NHS

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2012/01january/pages/government-review-advises-on-french-pip-breast-implants.aspx>

- Breast Cancer Care

<http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk/>

Breast Cancer Care helpline: 0808 800 6000

- Health Talk Online

<http://www.healthtalkonline.org/>

In addition there are various groups on social networking sites where you may be able to interact with other women who have similar concerns.

## If you wish to pursue a compensation claim

If you have PIP implants you may be able to make a claim for compensation. Claims for clinical negligence are complicated and you should seek advice from a specialist lawyer. There are strict time limits in place to make any compensation claim. Generally speaking, the sooner you seek advice the better. Further details can be found in our booklet *Clinical Negligence: An introduction to claiming compensation*, or on our website at [www.thompsons.law.co.uk](http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk)

## About Thompsons Solicitors

Thompsons Solicitors were established 90 years ago, act only for claimants, never insurers and are experts in claims for clinical negligence.

We are currently acting in a number of claims for women who have PIP implants.

Our specialist clinical negligence lawyers will be happy to talk you through the process of making a claim in plain English and advise you as to whether or not you have a valid claim for compensation. We will be happy to answer any questions or queries you may have, under no obligation and completely free of charge.

## For further information call

**08000 224 224**

(free from landlines)

**0330 123 1230**

(free from mobiles where covered by inclusive minutes)

**or visit [www.thompsons.law.co.uk](http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk)**



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