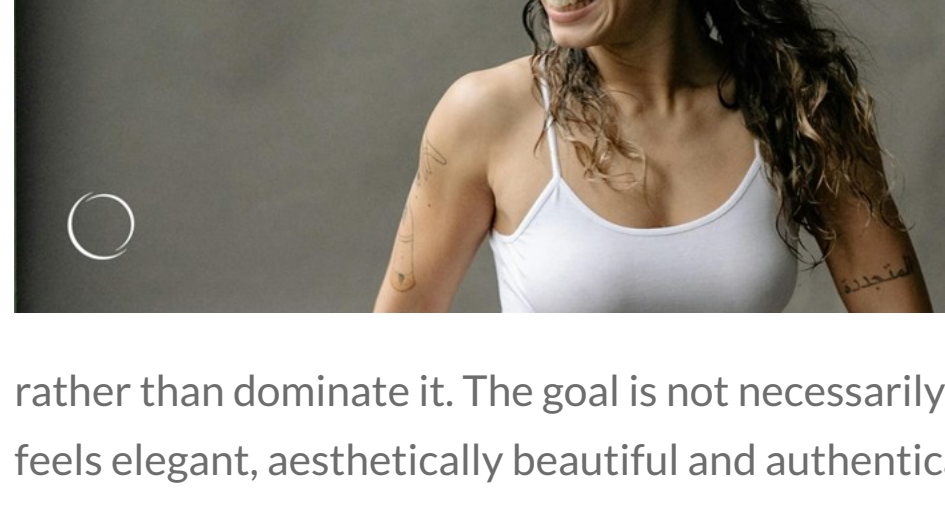


# The ballerina breast: Why some augmentation patients are going smaller

Ariel Frankeny | Freelance Writer Thursday, July 16, 2026



For years, **breast augmentation** trends were often associated with larger implants and dramatic transformations. Today, however, a growing number of patients are embracing a different philosophy, one focused on proportion, balance and refinement. Often referred to as the "ballerina breast" trend, this movement reflects a broader shift toward natural-looking results that complement a patient's frame

rather than dominate it. The goal is not necessarily to have smaller breasts, but rather to achieve a look that feels elegant, aesthetically beautiful and authentically aligned with the individual.

This shift is influencing not only first-time breast augmentation patients, but also many women who have undergone augmentation years ago and are now choosing to **downsize their implants**. While some assume breast implant downsizing is as simple as exchanging one implant for another, the reality is often far more complex. Factors such as skin quality, implant history and breast tissue changes can all influence whether additional procedures, such as a **breast lift** or **fat grafting**, are needed to achieve the best possible outcome.

We reached out to ASPS Member Surgeons **Noël Natoli, MD, FACS**, and **Gene Lee, MD, MPH**, for their insights on the evolving world of breast aesthetics, what breast implant revision surgery actually involves and the growing appeal of proportionate, natural-looking enhancement.

## Why smaller breast implants are having a moment

Ask any plastic surgeons what they're seeing in consultations today, and one answer comes up repeatedly – patients are thinking differently about breast augmentation than they did even a decade ago.

"I'm seeing more patients who either want a smaller, more proportionate implant from the start or who want to downsize implants they had placed years ago," said Dr. Natoli. "Many patients who had implants placed 10 or more years ago are now interested in going smaller, and some are considering **removing their implants** altogether."

Across the specialty, surgeons say patients are redefining success – not by cup size, but by balance, proportion and results that look effortlessly natural.

"Even five or 10 years ago, many consultations centered around achieving a certain cup size," said Dr. Lee. "Today, the conversation is much more nuanced. Patients are asking for proportion, balance and longevity. Many of them specifically tell me they don't want anyone to know they've had breast augmentation but rather simply want to look refreshed and naturally feminine."

Many women returning for revision surgery simply find themselves in a different season of life.

"I've also seen a significant increase in women who had larger implants years ago and now want something that better reflects where they are in life," said Dr. Lee.

These changes in how patients view breast augmentation come as part of a cultural evolution.

"I think it reflects a broader shift in what feels current and beautiful," said Dr. Natoli. "Fashion and runway trends have moved away from a very large, obviously augmented look, and many patients are asking for something softer and more natural."

Plastic surgeons have learned more about how implants affect breast tissue over time.

"Heavier implants can stretch the skin and breast tissue, especially with gravity, weight changes, pregnancy or aging," said Dr. Natoli. "For that reason, many surgeons are more cautious about recommending very large implants and are more focused on choosing a size that fits the patient's frame and will age well."

This emphasis on long-term outcomes mirrors a broader shift toward aesthetic choices that prioritize subtlety, balance and timelessness over dramatic transformation.

"I think patients have become more educated, and beauty itself has evolved," said Dr. Lee. "There has been a shift away from dramatic transformations toward refinement. Rather than chasing trends, people are looking for results that feel authentic to them. I've always believed that beauty is most elegant when it doesn't announce itself."

## What the ballerina breast aesthetic actually means

Despite the growing popularity of the phrase, neither surgeon defines the ballerina breast trend by a specific implant size.

"There isn't one universal cutoff," said Dr. Natoli. "The right size depends so much on the patient's body, frame, starting breast tissue and goals."

Rather, this term describes an overall aesthetic.

"In general, when people talk about a 'ballerina' breast aesthetic, they're usually describing something smaller, lifted, elegant and proportionate rather than a specific implant size," said Dr. Natoli. "For some patients, that may mean a small implant; for others, it may mean a lift without an implant or a different combination altogether"

Ultimately, surgeons say the "ballerina" aesthetic is defined less by size than by graceful proportion and overall body harmony.

"To me, it represents elegance rather than volume," said Dr. Lee. "It's a breast that complements the rest of the body instead of becoming its defining feature."

For many patients, this aesthetic is as much about how they live as how they look, favoring results that feel balanced, versatile and effortless in everyday life.

"Many younger patients today value fitness, movement and versatility," said Dr. Lee. "They want an aesthetic that looks beautiful in a dress, in workout clothes or simply in everyday life. The appeal isn't necessarily having smaller breasts but rather having breasts that feel proportional, athletic and naturally balanced."

A focus on harmony extends well beyond breast surgery.

"The emphasis used to be on creating a dramatic change," said Dr. Lee. "Today, the emphasis is on preserving identity. Patients still want enhancement, but they want it to look believable."

Modern patients are pursuing confidence rather than attention.

"The overall trend is less about looking 'done' and more about looking comfortable, confident and like yourself," said Dr. Natoli.

## Why breast implant downsizing is often more complex than patients expect

Although many women assume breast implant downsizing simply involves replacing one implant with another, the truth is that revision surgery is often considerably more involved.

"Downsizing is often more involved than simply taking out one implant and putting in a smaller one," said Dr. Natoli. "When an implant has been in place for years, it can stretch the skin and breast tissue and change the pocket where the implant sits."

Ultimately, successful implant downsizing isn't simply about removing volume – it's about restoring balance, shape and structural support.

"If you simply remove volume without addressing those changes, the breast can look deflated," said Dr. Natoli. "That's why many downsizing patients also need a lift or another supportive procedure to reshape the breast, improve the nipple position and remove extra skin. The goal is not just to go smaller; it's to create a smaller result that still looks balanced and supported."

Revision surgery also frequently involves rebuilding the breast's internal support.

"Many patients assume we simply remove one implant and replace it with a smaller one," said Dr. Lee. In reality, revision surgery is often considerably more complex. Larger implants stretch both the skin and the internal support structures of the breast. Frequently we're reconstructing the breast pocket and capsule at the same time we're changing implant size. Revision surgery is often where experience matters most because every patient presents with a different set of anatomical changes that need to be thoughtfully addressed."

This is why breast implant revision surgery is often highly individualized, with the surgical plan based on tissue quality, skin elasticity and the patient's long-term goals rather than implant size alone.

## When a lift or fat grafting becomes part of the plan

One of the most common additions to breast implant downsizing is a breast lift.

"A lift becomes more likely when a patient wants to remove implants completely or significantly reduce the implant size," said Dr. Natoli. "If the skin has stretched, if the nipple sits lower than ideal or if the breast already has a drooping appearance, a lift is often needed to get the best shape."

However, a lift is not necessary for every patient.

"Some patients may not need a lift if they are only making a small size change and their tissues are still very firm and youthful," said Dr. Natoli.

The decision depends less on the implant itself and more on the surrounding tissue.

"If a substantially smaller implant is placed without addressing that stretched envelope, the natural breast will appear deflated, with the nipple sitting too low relative to the breast implant, also known as a waterfall deformity," said Dr. Lee. "In these cases, a mastopexy (breast lift) allows us to remove excess skin, reshape the breast and reposition the nipple to restore a more youthful contour."

The tradeoff for this methodology is additional scarring.

"While that may mean accepting more scars, those scars are usually the necessary tradeoff for achieving a balanced, natural-looking result rather than simply exchanging one implant for another," said Dr. Lee.

In some patients, fat grafting can further refine the final outcome and contribute to a more natural breast augmentation result.

"Fat grafting can be very helpful when a patient wants a softer transition, especially in the upper part of the breast," said Dr. Natoli. "If someone is removing implants or going much smaller, they may worry about losing that fullness on top. In those cases, adding a patient's own fat can help soften the contours and create a more natural-looking shape."

One of the most valuable tools at a plastic surgeon's disposal today may, in fact, be fat grafting.

"It allows us to soften implant edges, improve transitions, restore areas of volume deficiency and create a breast that feels more natural," said Dr. Lee.

Hybrid procedures pairing modest implants with fat transfer can be particularly effective.

"Rather than relying entirely on a larger implant to create the desired shape, combining implants with fat grafting allows us to individualize the result," said Dr. Lee. "In my experience, this often produces a breast that looks softer, feels more natural and better harmonizes with the patient's overall physique."

## Choosing a size you'll still love years from now

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from both surgeons is that successful breast augmentation should be viewed as a long-term decision rather than one driven by current trends.

"I tell patients to think not only about how they want to look now, but how that size will fit their life in the future," said Dr. Natoli. "A size that feels exciting today may feel too large later if their weight, lifestyle or preferences change."

Patients should be encouraged to think beyond cup sizes.

"One of my jobs is helping patients move beyond thinking in cup sizes because cup size is actually a poor measurement," said Dr. Natoli. "Instead, I evaluate chest dimensions, existing breast tissue, skin quality, body proportions and lifestyle. My advice is to choose timelessness over trends."

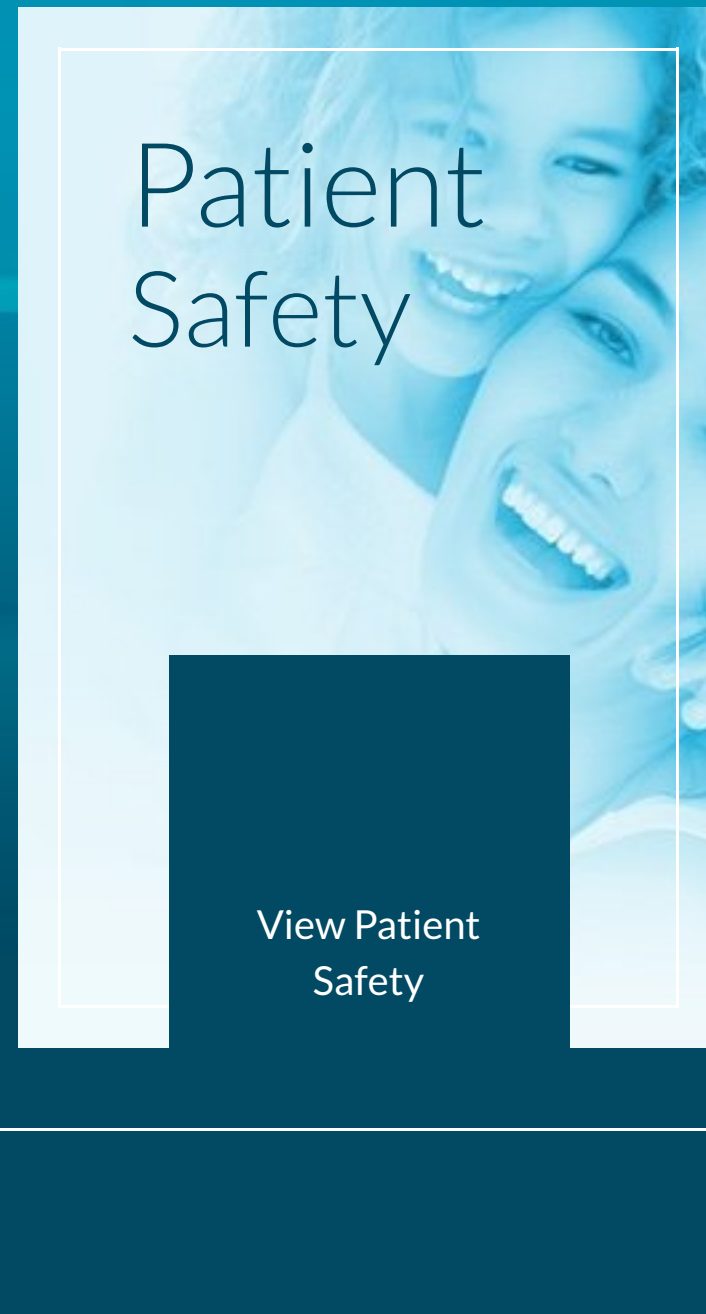
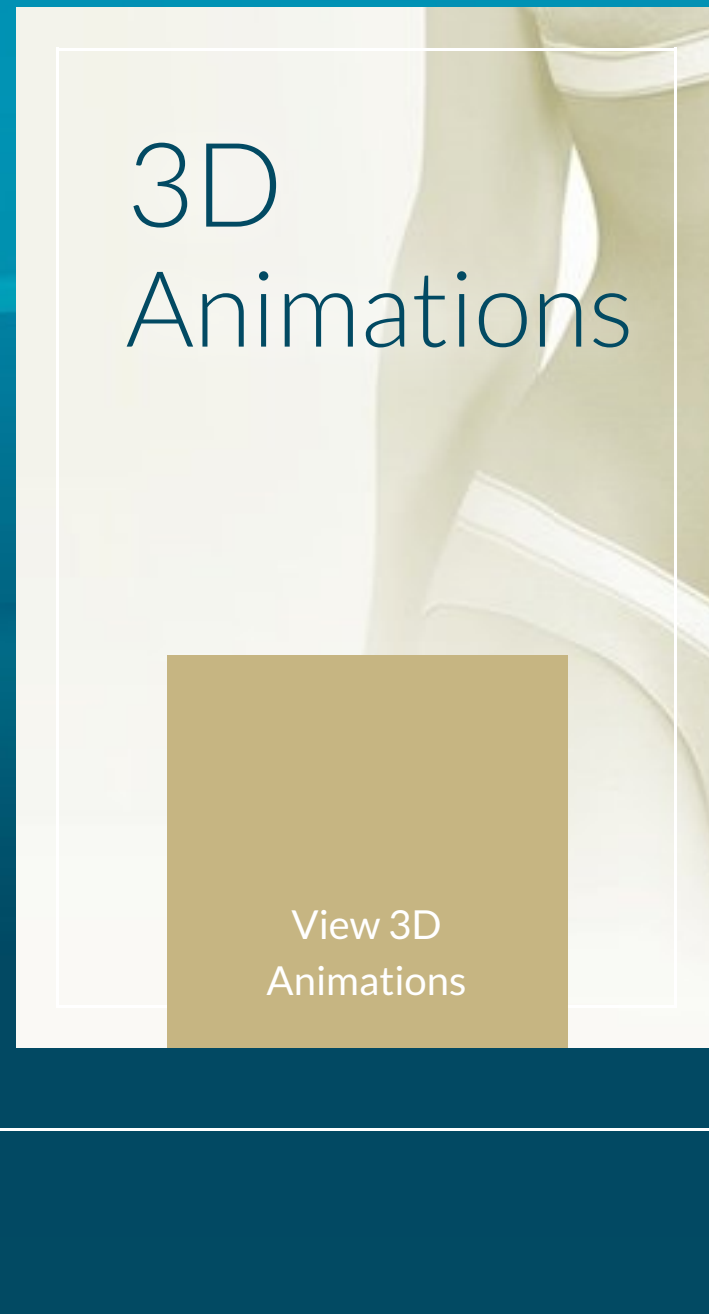
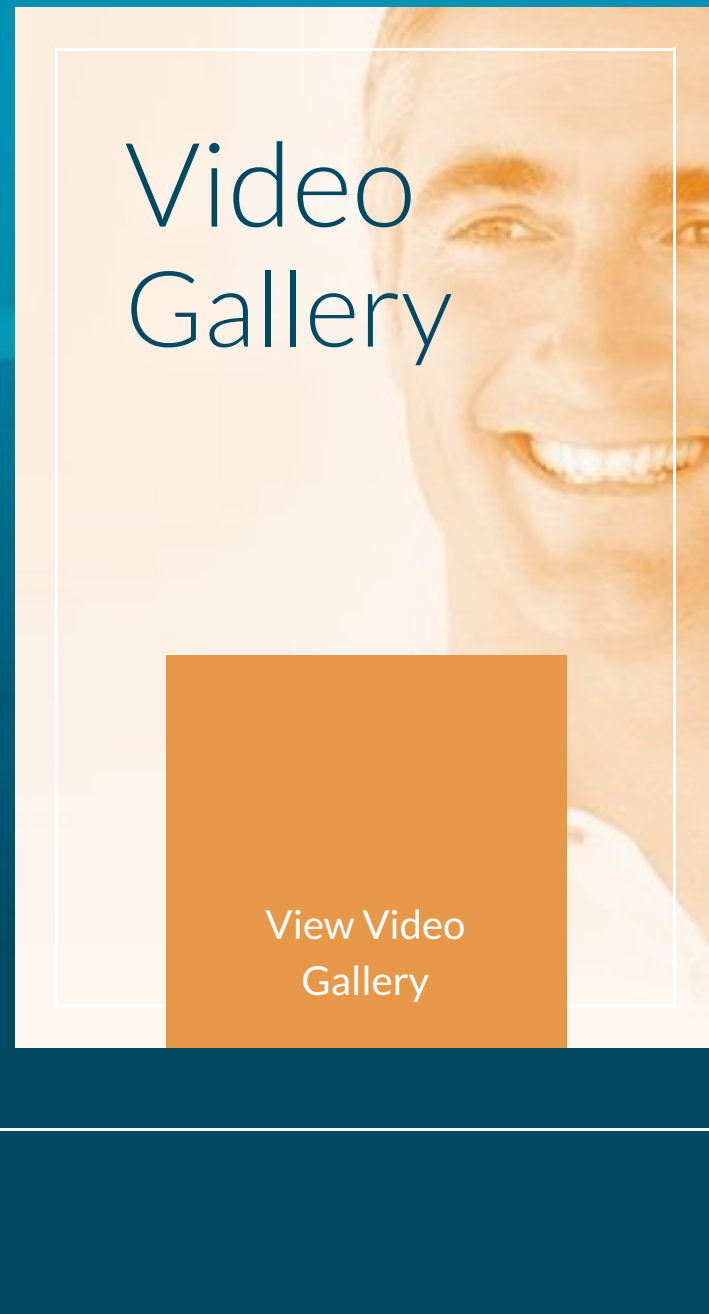
Finally, it's important to remember that bigger isn't inherently better.

"Patients should also understand that larger implants generally place greater stress on the breast tissues and are associated with higher rates of long-term revision, tissue thinning, implant malposition and other implant-related complications," said Dr. Lee. "Bigger isn't inherently better. The operations that age the best are often the ones performed with restraint. The most rewarding compliment I receive isn't that someone notices a patient's breast augmentation, but rather when people simply tell her she looks healthy, confident and naturally beautiful."

The growing popularity of more proportionate, smaller breast implants reflects a broader movement toward personalization and the natural-looking results within aesthetic medicine. Whether patients are pursuing augmentation for the first time or are considering downsizing existing implants, the focus has become increasingly centered on balance, longevity and harmony with the body's natural proportions. Because breast implant downsizing often involves much more than a simple implant swap and often requires an implant exchange, working with a qualified, board-certified plastic surgeon is essential for creating a plan that addresses both volume and shape. As beauty standards ever evolve, the ballerina breast trend highlights the importance of refinement over excess and confidence over convention.

*To find a qualified plastic surgeon for any cosmetic or reconstructive procedure, consult a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. All ASPS members are board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery, have completed an accredited plastic surgery training program, practice in accredited facilities and follow strict standards of safety and ethics. Find an ASPS member [in your area](#).*

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