
Breast implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma

This fact sheet includes important information for people with breast implants or those considering breast implants.

What is BIA-ALCL?

BIA-ALCL is a rare type of cancer of the immune system.

It is not breast cancer, which forms in the cells of the breast. BIA-ALCL cancer cells usually grow in the fluid (seroma) and scar tissue (capsule) that develop around a breast implant.

BIA-ALCL has been connected with some types of breast implants. At March 2021, the federal regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), is aware of about 76 cases of BIA-ALCL in Australia.

What types of breast implants are there?

Breast implants are gel or fluid-filled pouches and come in different sizes and shapes. The surface of the implant may be smooth or rough (textured).

Tissue expanders are temporary implants used to slowly stretch the skin before a breast reconstruction.

On average, between 5000 and 6000 breast implant and breast reconstruction procedures are undertaken in Victoria each year.

Who is at risk of BIA-ALCL?

If you have breast implants now, or have had them in the past, you may be at risk of BIA-ALCL. The level of risk depends on the type of implant and is estimated to be between one in 2500 and one in 25,000.

The risk is highest for the most textured implants. The majority of implants used in Victoria in the past 15 years have been textured.

Should I have the implants removed?

Experts do not recommend removing your breast implants or tissue expanders if you do not have symptoms of BIA-ALCL.

If you need or want to get the implants removed, please discuss your options with your GP or implanting surgeon.

How do I know what implants I have?

Not all patients will know what type of implant they have received.

If you are unsure, in the first instance contact your implanting surgeon.

Where the surgery was performed after 2015, the Australian Breast Device Registry (ABDR) may be able to provide further information. Contact the registry on (03) 9903 0205.

If you had surgery before 2015, an earlier registry, the Breast Implant Registry may have your implant details. Contact the registry on (02) 9437 9200.

What if I had my breast implants inserted overseas?

Please see your GP if you have any symptoms or concerns. If possible, take any records you have of your overseas surgery.

What are the symptoms of BIA-ALCL?

The most common symptom of BIA-ALCL is swelling of a breast caused by fluid around the implant. Other possible symptoms include pain in the breast, a rash on the breast or a lump on the breast, in the armpit and elsewhere.

If you are worried about any changes in your breasts, or if you have any other concerns, please see your GP.

A Victorian consumer helpline has also been set up for you to talk to a registered nurse about any questions or concerns you may have.

Victorian consumer helpline

(03) 9902 0077

When would symptoms start?

The onset of symptoms of BIA-ALCL may vary from person to person.

In almost all cases, the disease develops three to 14 years following a patient's procedure, with an average time to diagnosis of eight years.

I have had breast implants, what should I do?

Whether you have breast implants or not, it is always recommended that you self-examine your breasts regularly to check for any changes. Advice on how to self-examine your breasts is available from Cancer Council Victoria at <https://www.cancervic.org.au/downloads/cpc/br-east/breast-awareness.pdf>

For women who have breast implants but experience no symptoms, no further action is required other than regular self-examination.

What tests might I need to have?

After gaining an understanding of your circumstances, your GP will discuss next steps with you and may also arrange for follow up tests for example, diagnostic imaging scans.

Is BIA-ALCL curable?

The TGA states that when BIA-ALCL is detected early, most cases are cured by surgery alone. If there is a solid lump or the cancer has spread (or is more aggressive), chemotherapy, radiotherapy or additional surgery may be required.

Are the higher risk implants still available?

A list of recalled, cancelled and suspended implants can be found on the TGA's breast implants hub at

<https://www.tga.gov.au/hubs/breast-implants>

The TGA continues to review and assess breast implants available in the Australian market and will provide updates on the TGA website at

<https://www.tga.gov.au/alert/breast-implants-and-anaplastic-large-cell-lymphoma>

Where can I find more information on breast implants and risks?

The TGA has developed two webinars that will take you through important things to look out for and what you should do next if you are worried.

- [Reconstructions](https://www.tga.gov.au/webinar-recording-bia-alcl-and-breast-reconstructions)
- [Augmentations](https://www.tga.gov.au/webinar-recording-bia-alcl-and-breast-augmentations)

More information

- [TGA consumer hub](https://www.tga.gov.au/hubs/breast-implants)
- [TGA BIA-ALCL webpage](https://www.tga.gov.au/breast-implant-associated-cancer-or-bia-alcl)
- [TGA Allergan fact sheet](https://www.tga.gov.au/consumer-fact-sheet-recall-allergan-biocell-breast-implants)