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Vacuum Therapies for Mastectomy Recovery and Breast Reconstruction

By Anita Shannon

Breast cancer is a unique cancer. Like all cancer conditions, the initial trauma of the diagnosis is followed by the heavy weight of significant choices about treatment. The focus on becoming well supersedes the many things in life that we normally take so seriously, shifting us to the recognition of the beautiful reasons for living a healthy and full life after recovery. Breast cancer has the added aspect of disfigurement or loss of a visible body part ... a part that often is integral to our physical and emotional feminine identity.

Along with potential shifts in physical self-image and emotional/ energetic balance that can accompany dealing with breast cancer, comes the physical impact of various combinations of surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation.

Vacuum therapies are used to gently release the many conditions that occur with lumpectomies and mastectomies. The surgical site often becomes bound and restricted by scar tissue, creating pain and issues with common movements. The fascia has been cut, and heat from post-surgical inflammation in the area can fuse the damaged fascia onto the musculature or into stiff “rolls” of tissue.

If lymph nodes are removed, more internal scar tissue and lymphatic restriction can form, often complicated by the external scars that arise from such radical procedures. As we all have observed in our clients, a serious restriction can result in compensatory patterns that affect the immediate area, and travel onward through the body from there. We have noticed that a large number of women who had a surgical procedure or radiation on the breast suffer from back, neck and shoulder issues that eventually can migrate to the hips and knees.

Radiated tissue responds well to vacuum therapies in many cases. Gentle pumping techniques are performed utilizing a large cone-shaped cup, and the burned and fused tissue often separates to eliminate the rigid “orange peel” texture, enabling the body to begin restoring more normal tissue function and movement.

Some of our most amazing results came from working with a friend and one other patient, who were both referred by a local physician. By using vacuum therapies on my friend to prepare the area for reconstructive surgery, the physician was able to easily insert a 200cc implant in an area she doubted would accommodate an implant of 125cc.

The other patient had been told that reconstruction was not possible, due to excessive restrictions and scar tissue. After a series of treatments with vacuum therapies, she was scheduled for surgery and ended a long two-year search for healing after her mastectomy.

So many people have had lumpectomies, reductions, augmentations and breast lifts for a variety of reasons. These procedures can also lead to rigid breast tissue and scars, which are very painful and restrictive.

Gentle therapies offset the invasive surgeries and treatments that can accompany the diagnosis of breast cancer. While most of the vacuum treatments are soothing and comfortable, some of the scar and fascia release can be a little more intense.

We found out years ago that “Phantom Breast Syndrome” does indeed exist, and the large cone-shaped cups address this beautifully. The cup shape cradles the energy field that is still present, and the gentle pumping movement has made a large number of clients say “I feel like both breasts are there ... I feel balanced”. We can also use unique micro-cup magnets to assist with phantom itching and pain that is common after a mastectomy.

One of the most wonderful things about this gentle and effective therapy is that the results are quickly noticeable. Try a session or two with a trained professional and assess your progress ... and share the great news with your friends and community!

ANITA J. SHANNON is a Licensed Massage Therapist and a licensed Cosmetologist since 1983, specializing in skin care, body treatments, clinical Aromatherapy and various modalities of massage therapy. She is a national educator since 1990 and appears at numerous national Spa and Massage Therapy conventions each year, and was inducted into the Massage Therapy Hall of Fame in 2011.

Anita is the Director of Advanced Continuing Education (ACE), an NCBTMB Continuing Education provider established in 2001, and has presented countless workshops on ACE Massage Cupping™ and MediCupping™ at international locations since developing these brands of bodywork in 2002. Anita has published seven articles on this subject in **Massage Today**, **Massage Magazine** and **Les Nouvelles Esthétiques**, along with publishing five educational videos.

Her newest efforts include **The Pink Cup Project** for breast health and cancer recovery support, and **TheraCupping™** home care products and education. A new program will be introduced in 2012 called **Foster a Firefighter** to promote the use of VacuTherapies™ to assist with lung health for firefighters.

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