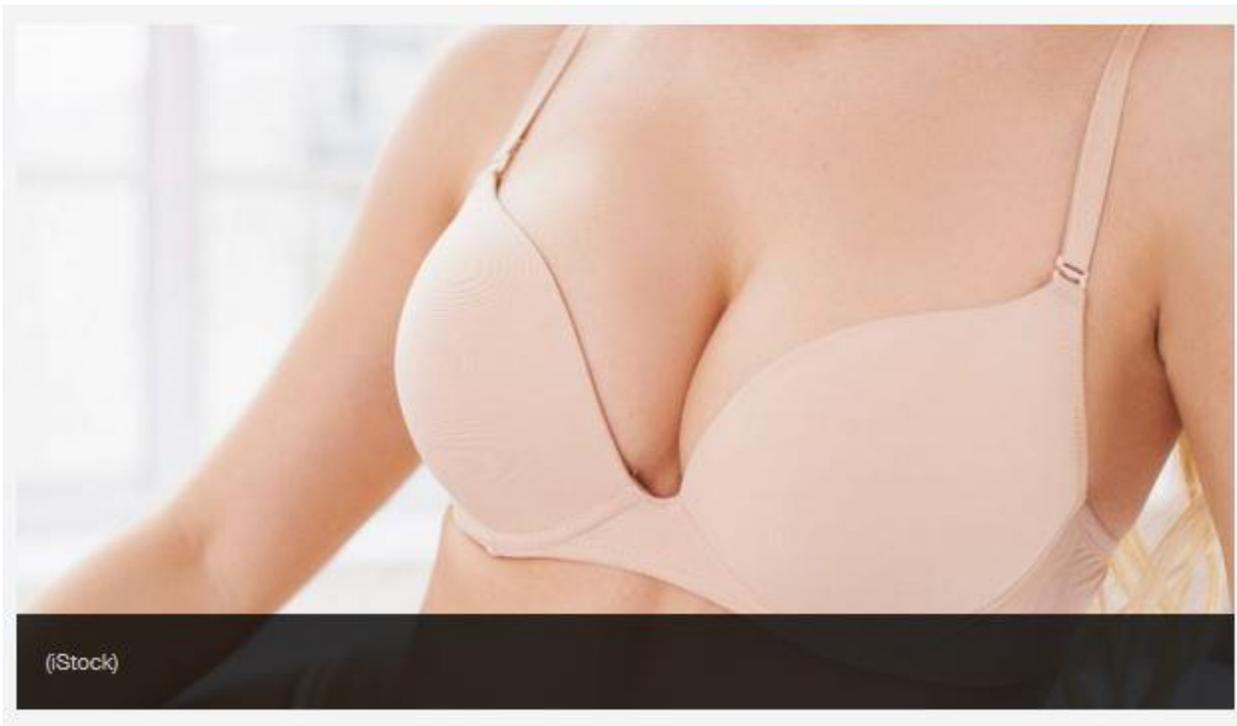


FITNESS + WELL-BEING

# Breast implant rupture lawsuit: How common is it and what are the risks?

By **Melinda Carstensen** · Published April 14, 2017 · FoxNews.com

A rare but potentially dangerous breast implant mishap is at the center of a new lawsuit in San Diego, California. Roger Hedgecock, the former mayor of San Diego, is a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit that blames the city for failing to repair a sidewalk damaged by a tree, which he claims caused his wife to trip and fall, allegedly leading her breast implants to rupture and leak silicone into her bloodstream. The suit claims Cynthia Hedecock's 2015 injury required removal of her implants and a "grueling procedure" to get them replaced followed by several weeks of recovery.

## **What causes breast implants to rupture, and how common is it?**

While trauma from physical impact can cause breast implants to rupture, so can the age of implants, board-certified plastic surgeon Alan Matarasso, M.D., spokesman for the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, told Fox News. That said, there's no standard frequency plastic surgeons recommend women replace their breast implants, and most of the time, a silicone rupture can occur before it's physically noticeable.

## **THESE ARE THE RISKS OF BREAST IMPLANTS, ACCORDING TO A SURGEON**

Statistics on the commonality of ruptures vary depending on the year of implantation and the manufacturer, but these events are "very rare," Matarasso said.

### **How can you tell if there's a rupture?**

According to the Mayo Clinic, changes in breast size or shape, pain, soreness or swelling, lumps, or softening or hardening, may be signs of a breast implant rupture.

The best way to tell if that's the case is with a mammogram, said Matarasso, who's also the vice president of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery and Private Practice in New York City. "The mammographers are so skilled now because there are over 2 million women with breast implants in the U.S.," he explained. In fact, Matarasso said, "There's a term in radiology called a 'spaghetti sign,' where they can tell if the implant is ruptured."

### **6 THINGS WOMEN WHO GOT BOOB JOBS WANT YOU TO KNOW**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends checkups to detect potential ruptures three years after implantation and every two years after that.

#### **How do ruptures happen?**

Matarasso said that, with implants comprised of saline, which is liquid rather than the harder gel-like consistency of silicone, you can immediately tell whether there's been a rupture, as the liquid will simply drain.

"If it's a saline implant that leaked, it's like putting a pin in a baggy," Matarasso said. "It empties right away. There's no urgency because the body absorbs it."

But with silicone implants, a rupture can be more serious if the silicone enters the bloodstream, as the Hedgecocks claim happened in their case.

Ruptures can be either intracapsular or extracapsular. The difference is, during an intracapsular rupture, the silicone breaks through its own layer and into the scar tissue, which surgeons refer to as a capsule or shell, that is formed after surgery, and lies between the silicone and the natural breast. Intracapsular ruptures are the most common type of ruptures.

#### **'MY BOOB JOB RUINED MY LIFE'**

During an extracapsular rupture, the silicone breaks through the scar tissue, potentially traveling to other areas of the body.

There's no exact time after a rupture that a woman should seek treatment to minimize risk, but Matarasso recommended the swiftest treatment possible after a possible extracapsular rupture. According to the Mayo Clinic, ruptures aren't linked to cancer, reproductive issues or connective tissue diseases. The issue is that, according to the FDA, sometimes removing the material that's traveled beyond the capsule can be difficult.

#### **What are some other causes of breast implant ruptures?**

If you have breast implants or are considering the cosmetic surgery, Matarasso cautioned that, indeed, impact from sports like martial arts or skiing, as well as that from a car accident, can lead to a rupture. But, as the FDA points out, compression during a mammogram, damage by surgical instruments, or too much handling during surgery, are just a handful of the other factors that can cause the event to occur. And again, the older the implant, the more likely it is to rupture.