What is a breast implant?
A breast implant is a sac (implant shell) of silicone elastomer which is surgically implanted under your chest tissues. Implants may be filled with either saline or silicone gel.

MemoryGel® breast implants
The MemoryGel® breast implants you’ve been hearing about have actually been in use for almost 20 years. Sometimes they are referred to as a “gummy bear implant” style. This is because MemoryGel® breast implants feature a cohesive, gelatin-like silicone substance that acts as a solid rather than a liquid. It holds together uniformly while still retaining the natural give of breast tissue.

MemoryGel® breast implants feel more like natural breast tissue. Over a million women all over the world have them.

MemoryGel® breast implants are available in a variety of profiles (which refers to the amount of forward projection off the chest wall, in relation to the base width of the implant). This allows your surgeon to achieve a better match between desired breast projection and your individual body frame. Ask your surgeon for greater detail on selecting the right breast implant for you.

What is the silicone used in breast implants?
Silicone is derived from silicon, a semi-metallic or metal-like element that, in nature, combines with oxygen to form silicon dioxide, or silica. Beach sand, crystals, and quartz are silica, which is the most common substance on earth. Heating silica with carbon at a high temperature can produce silicon. Further processing can convert the silicon into a long chemical chain, or polymer, called silicone—which can be a liquid, a gel, or a rubbery substance. Various silicones are used in lubricants and oils, as well as in silicone rubber. Silicone can be found in many common household items, such as polishes, suntan and hand lotion, antiperspirants, soaps, processed foods, waterproof coatings, and chewing gum.

Are silicone breast implants safe?
The Institute of Medicine concluded that: “There is no evidence that silicone implants are responsible for any major diseases of the whole body. Women are exposed to silicone constantly in their daily lives.”

Is there latex in breast implants?
No. Mentor does not use latex in any of its implantable devices. These include tissue expanders, saline volume sizers, saline-filled breast implants and silicone gel-filled breast implants. Latex gloves are not allowed on the floor during the manufacturing process. At no time during the manufacturing process is latex or talc-containing material utilized. (Natural latex contains proteins which may cause allergic reaction in some individuals.)

Are there different styles of breast implants?
Breast implants come in a variety of shapes, surface textures, and sizes. The implants are available with a textured or smooth surface shell. Mentor breast implants come in either round or contoured shapes.

Who is not eligible for breast implants?
Contraindications (inadvisable treatment) for breast implants include women who are currently pregnant or nursing, have an existing malignant or pre-malignant cancer of their breast without adequate treatment, or have an active infection anywhere in their body. Your surgeon is the best resource to discuss eligibility.

Can I have a mammogram if I have breast implants?
Women with breast implants undergo mammography and other imaging techniques just as do women without implants. With breast implants, routine screening mammography will be more difficult, and you will need to have additional views, which means more time and radiation. However, the benefit of the mammogram in finding cancer outweighs the risk of the additional x-rays. Breast implants may complicate the interpretation of mammographic images by obscuring underlying breast tissue and/or by compressing overlying tissue. Accredited mammography centers and use of displacement techniques are needed to adequately visualize breast tissue in the implanted breast. Women with breast implants must inform mammography technicians about the presence of their implants so that the technician can use special techniques to minimize the possibility of rupture and to get the best possible views of the breast tissue. Because the breast is squeezed during mammography, it is possible for an implant to rupture during the procedure.

Deposits of calcium can be seen on mammograms and can be mistaken for possible cancer, resulting in additional surgery to biopsy and/or removal of the implant to distinguish them from cancer.

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1 Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Medicine 2007. Information for women about safety of silicone breast implants (full article www.iom.edu).
Do breast implants interfere with mammograms or radiation therapy?
Mentor has not tested the in vivo effects of radiation therapy in patients who have breast implants. The literature suggests that radiation therapy may increase the likelihood of capsular contracture, necrosis, and extrusion.

Is it possible to get a silicone allergy?
It is possible for anyone to develop an allergy to almost any substance on earth; however, silicone allergies are very rare. We are all exposed to silicone in our environment every day. It is found in many household items, such as polishes, suntan and hand lotion, antiperspirants, soaps, processed foods, waterproof coatings, and chewing gum.

What will happen during pregnancy?
Every woman is an individual and, therefore, has different results whether before a pregnancy or after. Your breasts will enlarge and will go through all the usual changes associated with pregnancy. The amount of enlargement will vary from woman to woman and the size of the implants will factor into this as well.

Can I breastfeed with breast implants?
Breast implants may interfere with your ability to successfully breastfeed. With respect to the ability to successfully breastfeed after breast implantation, one study reported up to 64% of women with implants were unable to breastfeed compared to 7% without implants. The periareolar incision site may significantly reduce the ability to successfully breastfeed.

Do silicone implants harm the developing fetus?
There have been concerns raised regarding potential damaging effects on children born of mothers with breast implants. A review of the published literature suggests there is no definitive evidence.

Why does the body form a capsule (capsular contracture) around the breast implant?
As a natural reaction to any device placed in the body, scar tissue will form around the breast implant surface creating a capsule.

What causes a silicone breast implant to rupture?
Causes of rupture include damage by surgical instruments during surgery, capsular contracture, closed capsulotomy, stresses such as trauma or intense physical manipulation, excessive compression during mammographic imaging, and unknown/unexplained reasons. You should also be aware that the breast implant may wear out over time and rupture.

What are the major long-term problems and safety issues with breast implants?
The long-term safety and effectiveness of breast implants have not been studied. However, Mentor is monitoring the long-term (i.e., 10-year) chance of implant rupture, re-operation, implant removal, and capsular contracture. Mentor is also conducting mechanical testing to assess the long-term likelihood of implant rupture.

For important information on the benefits and risks associated with silicone breast implant surgery, read our document called “Important Information for Reconstruction Patients about Mentor MemoryGel® Silicone Gel-Filled Breast Implants.”

What are the contraindications, warnings, and precautions I should consider?
Safety and effectiveness have not been established in patients with the following conditions:
- Autoimmune diseases such as lupus and scleroderma
- Conditions that interfere with wound healing (such as poorly controlled diabetes) and blood clotting (such as concurrent Coumadin therapy)
- A compromised immune system (e.g., currently receiving immunosuppressive therapy)
- Reduced blood supply to breast tissue

Do silicone implants cause major disease?
Concern over the association of breast implants to the development of autoimmune or connective tissue diseases, such as lupus, scleroderma, or rheumatoid arthritis, was raised because of cases reported in the literature with small numbers of women with implants. A review of several large epidemiological studies of women with and without implants indicates that these diseases are no more common in women with implants than those women without implants.

Published studies indicated that breast cancer is no more common in women with implants than those without implants.

If I experience a problem, should I report it?
If you believe that you have experienced a serious problem(s) related to your breast implants, you should have your health professional examine you. You are encouraged to report any adverse events through your health professional.