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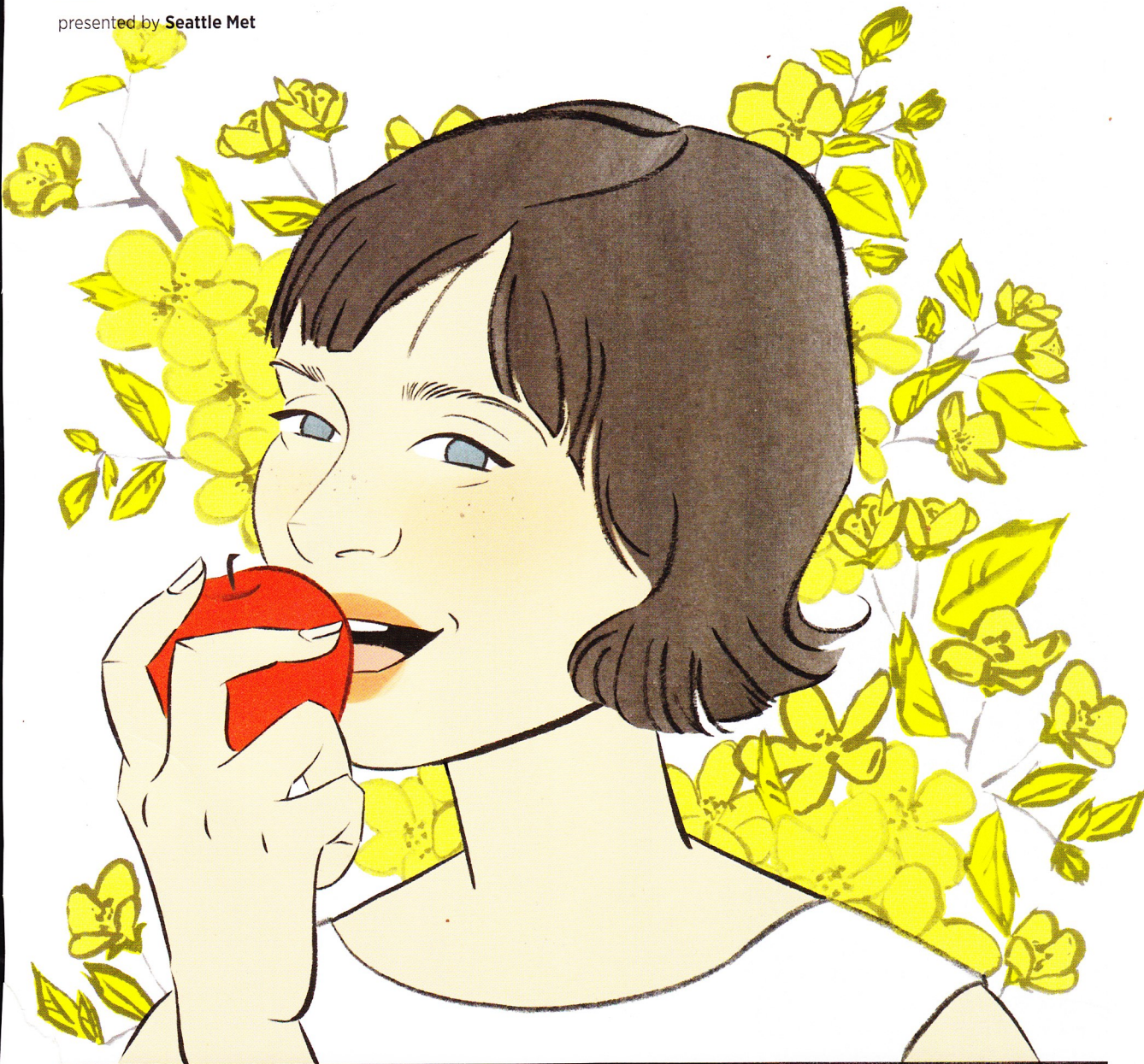
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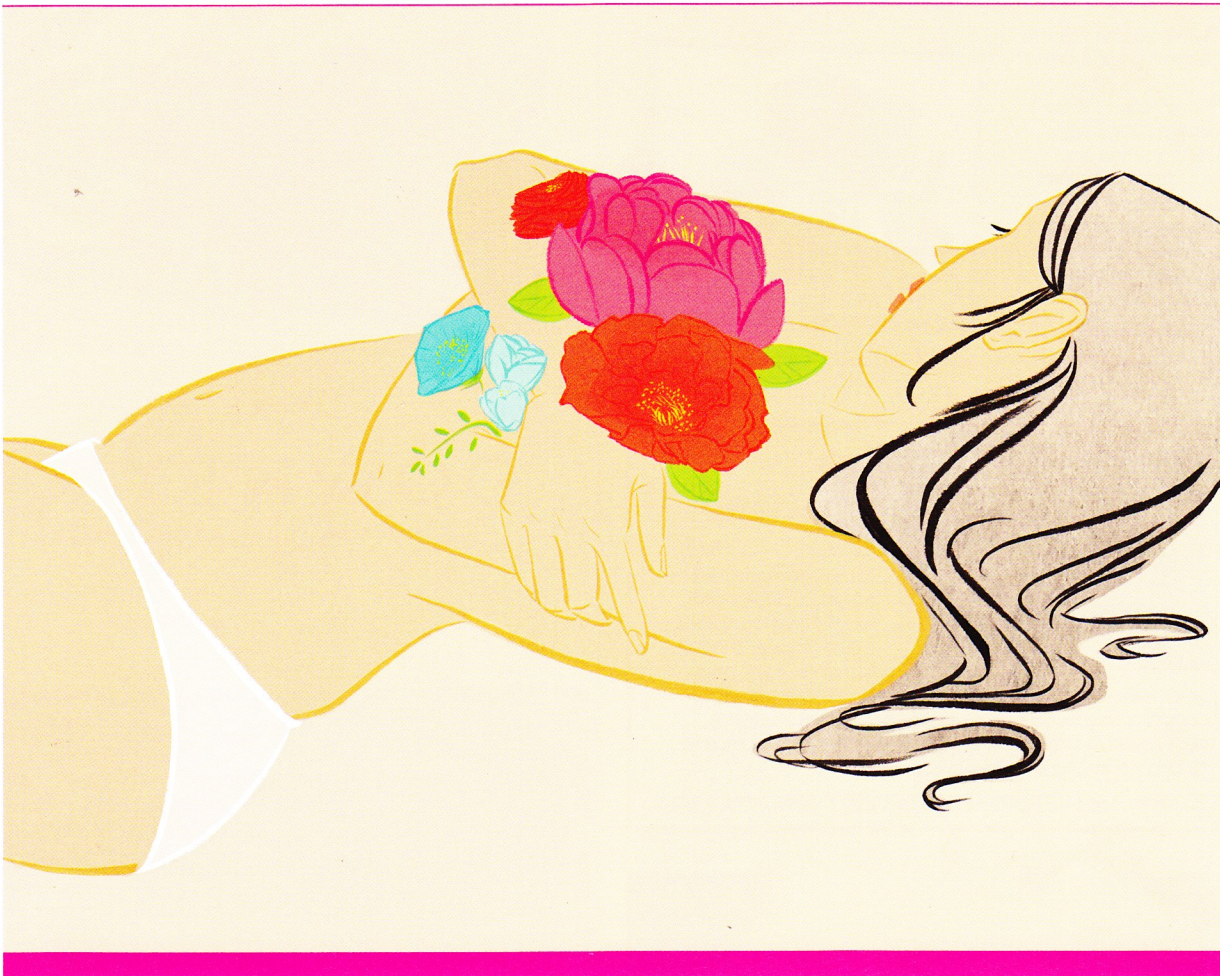
# Women's Health Annual 2013

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# BUILDING A NEW BUST

BREAST RECONSTRUCTION  
HAS COME A LONG WAY, BABY.

By Diane Mapes

**Forget your old notions about breast reconstruction** after a mastectomy. Thanks to a new method, what was once a long and arduous endeavor requiring multiple surgeries, protracted recovery time and, for some, complications such as implant hardening can now be a scalpel-free process with little recovery time.

Brava, pioneered by Miami plastic surgeon Dr. Roger Khouri, uses liposuction to transfer fat from a woman's hips, thighs, or stomach to her breast area, which is prepped for the process with a large suction-cup bra (also called Brava) that expands external skin, loosens scars, and creates a small pocket and new blood vessels. Once that pocket is created, the surgeon fills it with tiny injections of fat from the stomach, hips, thighs, etc., which then feed off the newly created blood vessels.

"I consider it a potential breakthrough," says Dr. Frank Isik of the Polyclinic in Seattle—who has more than 15 years of breast reconstruction experience using traditional methods such as tissue expanders, implants, and "flap" procedures, which harvest tissue and/or muscle from a woman's stomach or back to surgically create new breasts, and has worked with 10 patients using Brava. "It's a very natural reconstruc-

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tive method, and the recovery period is nowhere near as lengthy as the other methods. Plus it isn't as invasive, doesn't have extensive scars, and there's not a long recovery period."

Along with more realistic feeling breasts, Brava's benefits include body-contouring results from the liposuction and, according to three of Isik's patients, more sensation.

"The real minus with it is the onerous aspect of wearing the [Brava] device," Isik says. "It's cumbersome, it causes rashes, and patients need to wear it for several weeks before and after each procedure."

Patients opting for this type of fat-transfer reconstruction also have to undergo at least three procedures to get an A or B cup breast. A small C cup might require up to four or five sessions.

While reserved about the new procedure at first, Isik is now offering it to all qualifying breast reconstruction patients by enrolling them in an ongoing clinical

trial, and two surgeons at the Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Clinic at the UW Medical Center are performing this type of reconstruction, as well.

For women who prefer more traditional reconstruction—or for those interested in breast enhancement—Isik says the latest advancement is cohesive gel implants, also known as "gummy bear" implants.

"Currently, implants are silicone gel," he says. "There's a hard membrane on the outside but more of a gelatinous nature—like Jell-O—on the inside. If the outer membrane does rupture, it stays together but it is fluid."

These new "gummy bear" models, however, are more stable.

"They are far less likely to rupture, and if they are ruptured, they are far less likely to distort their shape," Isik says. "We think this is a significant improvement over the current technology in silicone implants, but results of ongoing clinical studies will demonstrate their benefits." ■

## TESTING FOR BREAST CANCER

Most women know the importance of self-exams, mammograms, and other screening methods when it comes to the early detection of breast cancers. Now there's a new test that can tell women if they're at risk even before they develop the disease (as one in eight US women do).

Phenogen Sciences, Inc.'s BREVAGEN DNA test requires a simple cheek swab. It examines seven genetic markers known as SNPs—single nucleotide polymorphisms—and also considers factors such as a woman's age, her ages at her first period and first live birth, family incidence of breast cancer, lifetime exposure to estrogen, and race and ethnicity.

Results include a five-year and a lifetime risk assessment. While the test doesn't diagnose breast cancer or tell women if they carry the gene—as BRCA tests do—it can tell a woman her risk of developing certain types of the disease, particularly estrogen-receptor-positive cancers, which make up 50 to 70 percent of all breast cancers.

"The BRCA1 and BRCA2 test is for estrogen-receptor-negative cancers, but more than half of the cancers are estrogen-receptor-positive," says Dr. Lisa Steffensen, a family physician with Primary Care Associates in Bellevue, who also regularly administers BREVAGEN. "This is a wonderful way to screen for a majority of the breast cancers."

Steffensen adds that women with a high lifetime or five-year risk can work to make preventive changes in diet (she swears by turmeric), exercise, alcohol consumption, and weight. Or they can opt for additional screenings. "Some women may want to have MRIs done, which could catch cancer earlier than a mammogram," Steffensen says.

BREVAGEN can also be helpful for women trying to decide whether to have hormone replacement therapy. "If a woman tests positive, estrogen would be like Miracle-Gro and feed tumor sites, so I wouldn't recommend it," Steffensen notes.

Some insurance plans cover the test, and a "patient protection program" limits the out-of-pocket cost to \$250 regardless of insurance. —DM



## CARING FOR THE GIRLS

BY DIANE MAPES

When it comes to breast practices, not every woman knows what's best.

Enter Elisabeth Dale, author of *Boobs: A Guide to Your Girls* and founder of the [TheBreastLife.com](http://TheBreastLife.com). Here's her sage advice on keeping breasts firm and fetching.

### GET SPORTY

"You want a sports bra that has separate compartments for each breast," says Dale. "Women's breasts don't just move up and down and side to side. They move in a figure eight. You want to contain that."

### DON'T SMOKE

"Smoking has been shown to cause sagging breasts." In fact, smoking causes sagging of all the skin of your body.

### WATCH WEIGHT

It's not about being super thin, but about avoiding frequent weight changes. "Yo-yo weight gain and loss can affect the elasticity of your skin." And you may lose your boobs and not get the fat back in the same place.

### MOISTURIZE

Put sunscreen on the décolletage. "Expose skin, and you're going to go from cleavage to 'creaseage' a lot quicker," she says. "Moisturize your boobs and keep sunscreen on them at all times. That whole area is delicate."

### STAND STRAIGHT

"A lot of times women won't stand up straight, so they look more saggy than they are." Dale suggests focusing on posture and building pectoral and arm muscles.

### SPLURGE

Many of us buy lingerie only for a new relationship. Change that. "If you're wearing something amazing under your clothes, you're going to feel like a rock star," she says.