March 28, 2017

Update on Breast Implant-Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL)

Dear Patients,

The Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at Brigham and Women’s Hospital would like to take a moment to address some questions that you may have after recent media coverage of Breast Implant-Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA-ALCL). BIA-ALCL is not a breast cancer, but rather a type of lymphoma that usually presents as a fluid swelling around breast implants. It was first described in 2011 and is rare. BIA-ALCL most often is treated with removing the implant and the scar tissue around it, although some patients may require additional treatment such as chemotherapy or radiation.

The recent increase in popular media reporting on BIA-ALCL is in response to an update from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on their website on March 21, 2017. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few points of that update for women who have breast implants:

- The FDA stated that BIA-ALCL may be more common in patients who have had textured implants than in those with smooth implants. The lifetime risk is thought to be 1 case for every 30,000 implants. The FDA is not recommending that textured implants be removed when no symptoms are present.
- Many implants used in cosmetic and reconstructive cases are smooth, and the FDA also does not recommend removal of smooth implants.
- The FDA recommends that you conduct regular breast self-examinations if you have breast implants. If you notice any lumps or swelling, contact your surgeon promptly to schedule an appointment.
- If you have silicone breast implants, your surgeon may recommend periodic magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to screen for implant rupture. These screening MRIs are not intended to screen for ALCL.

Below please find links to the updated FDA statement on BIA-ALCL as well as a link to BIA-ALCL Frequently Asked Questions from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, which you may find helpful. If you find that you have additional concerns that aren’t answered by these resources, please call your surgeon’s office to make an appointment for further discussion.

Updated FDA Statement on BIA-ALCL
https://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/ImplantsandProsthetics/BreastImplants/ucm239995.htm
ASPS-ASAPS Update: BIA-ALCL Frequently Asked Questions

Sincerely,

Brigham and Women’s Hospital
Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery