



'LESS IS MORE' FOR WOMEN WITH MAMMARY HYPERPLASIA

Story by Brian J. Reagan, M.D. Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Photography by Martin Mann

Since being quoted in an 1855 poem by Robert Browning, many have said “less is more” for a variety of reasons. These days, this sentiment is being expressed by an increasing number of women with breasts that are too large and out of proportion to the rest of the body.

Termed “mammary hyperplasia,” the condition commonly produces back pain, shoulder pain and chronic headaches in its sufferers. The condition can also lead to skin irritation, skeletal deformities, and even breathing problems. And according to Dr. Brian Reagan, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in La Jolla, far too many women suffer needlessly, and are unaware of a simple procedure that can alleviate these complaints – breast reduction.

Part of a group of techniques known as body contouring, breast reduction involves the removal of fat, glandular tissue, and skin. The breasts are elevated, made smaller, lighter, and more aesthetically pleasing. The areola (darker skin surrounding nipple) is also reduced. While this approach does leave scars, Dr. Reagan believes the tradeoff is well worth it. “I’m using newer techniques to minimize scarring. I have never had a patient regret the surgery because of scarring. These patients are so happy!” he said. “Furthermore, medical insurance often covers the costs. I’m one of only a few plastic surgeons that accept insurance, because I strongly feel that this is an important service to offer patients.”



Brian J. Reagan, M.D.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, over 100,000 breast reductions were performed in 2005

"I was never fond of going to the doctor. Even getting a shot really upset me, but Dr. Reagan made me feel comfortable with the whole procedure, and if I had to do it again, I would," said Lauren, who's active in musical theater. She said that prior to having the procedure, she was limited in what she could do as a performer and the types of roles she was offered and able to play. Now, having gone from a size 32DD-E to a 32B, she says "I'm a lot happier. I don't feel as top-heavy. I look good and proportionate. Now, I can go running and workout in the gym like everyone else,"

At 5-4, 34DD Karin had considered breast-reduction surgery even before Lauren's procedure, but didn't know a lot about the surgery at the time. Lauren's highly positive experience encouraged Karin to consult Dr. Reagan and go through with the procedure herself in April 2004. "It was very easy. I was in hardly any pain. I think I took pain pills the first day after surgery, and that was it. I was up doing housework a week later and I wasn't really ever 'laid up' and not able to do anything," recalled Karin, now a size 34C. "Now, things fit me better and I'm a lot more comfortable going out in public."

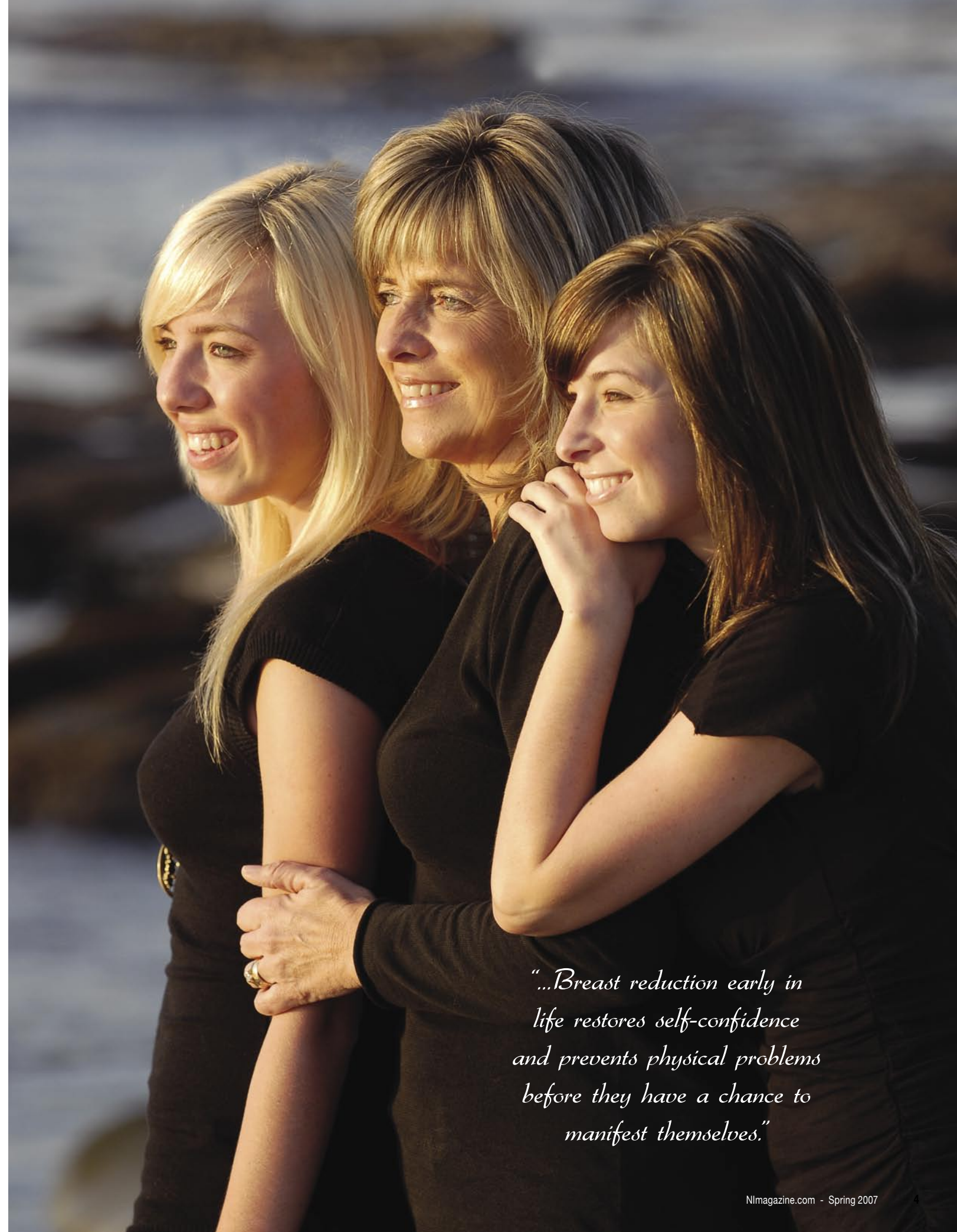
At 5-foot-3, Jenna, who shares her sister's disdain for medical procedures, underwent her procedure in July 2006, emboldened by the success of her family members. "I'm usually scared of the whole 'doctor scene', but I knew I'd feel a lot more comfortable, and after (her mother and sister) had it done, and it was so successful, they were so much happier. I knew it was the right thing to do. Now I'm a lot more confident and I have better posture."

None of the Campbells experienced any negative side effects, including loss of sensation. The duration of their post-surgery recovery time varied, ranging from just a few days up to about two weeks. "I've healed so well, you can't even see the scars anymore," said Karin, whose daughters share her sentiment. There's no better referral a physician can get than one from a highly pleased patient. "In fact, I talked three of my friends into getting the surgery, also," said Karin Campbell, one of many women – including her two daughters – who can attest that, indeed, less is more.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, over 100,000 breast reductions were performed in 2005, and approximately forty percent were on patients between the ages of thirty-five and fifty. Dr. Reagan believes this age distribution can be explained by effects of pregnancy on breast size. "Many of my patients report their breast size doubling with pregnancy. After breast feeding ceases, the breasts can droop, causing further strain on the neck and back." He also sees younger patients, and is very supportive of performing the procedure as early as possible.

Karin Campbell, 47, and her daughters Lauren, 21, and Jenna, 19 are among those who have had breast-reduction surgery performed by Dr. Reagan. All are petite women whose large breasts caused many of the aforementioned symptoms of mammary hyperplasia. Each of the Campbells also confirmed that it was difficult to find undergarments and attire that fit properly. Additionally, psychological discomfort came from being teased, gawked at, and insensitive remarks. Dr. Reagan said "Excessively large breasts create a psychological as well as physical toll on the patient. Many young women become extremely self-conscious, which in turn affects their self-confidence. Breast reduction early in life restores self-confidence and prevents physical problems before they have a chance to manifest themselves. It's a procedure that represents the best that plastic surgery has to offer."

At eighteen, the 4-11, eighty-two pound Lauren was the first of the three Campbell women to undergo the procedure, a week after she graduated high school in June 2003.



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