

Fact Sheet: Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act

U.S. Department of Labor
Employee Benefits Security Administration

The Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 (WHCRA) provides protections for individuals who elect breast reconstruction after a mastectomy. Under WHCRA, group health plans offering mastectomy coverage must provide coverage for certain services relating to the mastectomy, in a manner determined in consultation with the attending physician and the patient.

The required coverage includes:

- All stages of reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy was performed;
- Surgery and reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical appearance;
- Prostheses; and
- Treatment of physical complications of the mastectomy, including lymphedema.

Under WHCRA, mastectomy benefits may be subject to annual deductibles and coinsurance consistent with those established for other benefits under the plan or coverage.

Group health plans, health insurance companies and HMOs covered by the law must provide written notification to individuals of the coverage required by WHCRA upon enrollment and annually thereafter.