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**BUSTED!**  
**WHEN GUYS GROW BREASTS**

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**Summer's Low-Cut and Shirtless Fashions Separate the Buffed from the Boobs**

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**New York, NY May 30, 2002** - With the unofficial start of summer upon us, men nationwide will be revealing their chests via this season's low-cut fashions or when going shirtless at the pool or beach. But what happens when your pecs are a bit more developed than seems natural – and it's NOT as a result of working out? What happens when you are a man with breasts?

While there is seldom a need for alarm medically, gynecomastia (male breast enlargement) is devastating for many teenagers and young adults – to the point of sending them on a downward spiral of physical and psychological damage.

"When hormonal imbalances in males causes their breasts to grow, it is rare for patients to ever experience pain or bodily damage," says Dr. Al Aly of the University of Iowa's Division of Plastic Surgery. "But what is cause for alarm is the vicious circle of self-abuse that teenage boys may inflict on themselves – such as drugs and weight gain – that exacerbates their condition."

Dr. Aly sees gynecomastia cases on a regular basis, noting that studies show as many as 60% of teenage and adult men will develop unusual breast growth at some point in their lives. But even mild cases can take up to three years to resolve themselves and it is during this time that experts observe behavioral changes that aggravate the condition, often staving off the reduction that naturally occurs and sometimes causing even further growth.

"If a teenage male notices his breasts are growing, he is going to be far less likely to exercise," explains Dr. Aly. "He will often fear ridicule by his classmates when changing in the locker room and may even make frequent excuses to get out of phys-ed class. And swimming is definitely out of the question." According to Dr. Aly, this lack of exercise causes an increase in body-fat percentage, which recent theories allege leads to an increase in estrogen in both men and women. And an estrogen/testosterone imbalance in men will often lead to increased breast size.

"We have seen overweight gynecomastia patients whose breasts have gone from an A or B cup to a C or even a D," says Dr. Aly, who adds that obesity is a growing problem in Iowa. "We believe that the increase in fat increased the number of estrogen receptors in target organs such as the breast."

Other poor lifestyle choices that cause breast enlargement in males include drug use, particularly steroids or marijuana, which can cause unnatural growths of fatty tissues in the breasts. Cession of use of these drugs is required before most doctors will address the condition.

Different techniques Dr. Aly uses to alleviate gynecomastia include:

- Liposuction, in which small bits of fat are suctioned through several tiny incisions
- Areola Surgery, in which actual tissue is removed from underneath the skin through an incision just below the areola
- Breast Reduction, in which entire sections of skin are removed -- similar to when the procedure is performed on women

Dr. Aly also emphasizes that family physicians need to let their teen patients know that they can contact them privately with any bodily concerns, especially those possibly related to puberty. "Talking about adolescent changes is hard enough for teens, but not being well-informed can make growing up even harder."

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