

I am a victim of the PIP scandal. If you haven't heard about PIP breast implants I will give you an overview. PIP implants were breast implants manufactured by Poly Implant Prosthesis (PIP) in France and exported to the world since the 1990s. They were used by Australian surgeons in thousands of women. They were supposed to be made from medical grade silicone and were supposed to be SAFE.

It has since come to light that PIP implants contain industrial chemicals such as:

Basilone, Silopren and Rhodorsil. Commonly used for rubber tubing, computer components – even mattress-filler.

These chemicals are not approved for use in the human body.

I received these implants in 2006 from a visiting Adelaide surgeon. At the time I wasn't even told what he was using. I did not even receive a card with my implant information on it.

My reasons for having implants was not vanity. I didn't want to be on the cover of Ralph magazine, I just wanted to feel normal again after breast feeding two children. When I was left a single mother because I didn't 'look' good enough for my partner post breast feeding, my self confidence nose dived and I felt it necessary as part of the healing process to fix my body. I got a loan from the bank to fund the surgery.

I knew something wasn't right with my breast implants as soon as I came home from hospital. I was in agony. My breasts burned, itched and I had stabbing pains, and I had permanent nerve damage. My surgeon had returned to Adelaide and was not contactable. I was assured by his nurses that it was all part of the healing process and completely normal. I presented at the emergency department of my local hospital numerous times but they couldn't help. I had to take extra time off work as I could not go back in that state.

I had to get a local surgeon to see me, it took weeks to get an appointment. When I did he thought the implant had bottomed out. I needed more surgery. I had no private health insurance and could not afford it. I had to take out private health and wait the 1 year waiting period. Another year in pain.

I had to give up my sport of weight lifting, and I fell into depression.

After the next round of surgery, things did not improve. My general health had also started to deteriorate. My hair was falling out, I had no energy, I had trouble remembering things, I had frequent migraines requiring hospital admission. I also had unexplained joint aches and fevers, and my breast still hurt. The itching was the worst thing, I just could not alleviate it.

18 months after getting my PIP implants I was diagnosed with an auto immune disease – Hashimoto thyroiditis. I am now on medication for LIFE. I believe it is caused by these toxic implants. And I am not the only one. There are many many, women on our support site on face book with the same symptoms and diagnosis and there are only 349 of us. Many also have multiple ruptures and ill health.

In 2010 these implants were recalled off the market in Australia. Women with PIP implants were advised that they were still safe enough to be left in our bodies by the TGA, despite other countries urging the removal of all PIP implants and governments funding the procedures.

The advisor to the TGA, Dr Daniel Flemming (a cosmetic surgeon, and one of the biggest users of PIP implants) has stood by his stance that they are safe. I would also like to point out that the TGA, is funded by MEDICAL COMPANIES, like the one which supplied Dr Flemming with PIP implants.

Medical Vision Australia, the importer of this product recently restructured their company to limit their liability if a law suit was brought against them.

In 2011, I borrowed again against my credit card to travel overseas to have my PIP implants removed. I could not afford it in Australia. After removal, the itching disappeared, and my general health improved slightly. I feel like I will never get out of debt. Something that was supposed to make me feel good has ruined my life and the relationships with my children and new partner have suffered greatly. I still suffer depression, and constantly worry about the side effects years down the track for me and my twin babies I had whilst my PIPS were in.

Other women aren't as lucky as me. They have no way of getting these things out. The Australian Government has offered medicare rebatable MRIs. Great, so women who previously didn't know they had a rupture now can find out, but still can't afford to remove their implants causing more stress for them!? Why isn't the Australian government funding removal like all governments overseas?

Dr Daniel Flemming says, we shouldn't panic, we need to test them first to see if there is any toxicity to them before recommending removal. Wasn't that supposed to be done BEFORE they went in us???

I can tell you I was perfectly healthy BEFORE I had implants and now I am not.

If I bought weetbix, and it was recalled from the shelf for whatever reason, I could take it back to the store for a full refund. Why don't we get one for our faulty implants??

The Australian Government needs to fund all medical costs associated with removal and replacement of these implants. No more women should get sick because of inaction by the people who are supposed to protect our health. It's too late for me, but it may not be too late for someone else.