

## It was new boobs or bust: How Ulrika Jonsson got the cleavage she wanted for 20 years

By [Ulrika Jonsson](#)

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**For a long time, she hated her breasts - especially when they ballooned to an I-cup after her fourth child. Now, in this self-deprecatingly witty dissection, Ulrika Jonsson describes her decision to have a £6,000 reduction and 'uplift' - and reveals the result.**

For 20 years, I have longed for new breasts.

Words cannot describe how much I hated the ones Mother Nature had given me, especially when four children had finished with them.



**Uplifting: Ulrika Jonsson decided to go under the surgeon's knife after years of hating her breasts**

So negative did I feel that I didn't think of them as 'breasts' at all, but rather as two deteriorating mounds on my chest.

For me, they were awkward, cumbersome, unsightly, heavy, foreboding, unsexy, repulsive. Frankly, they revolted me.

That's why, a month ago, at the age of 41, I finally decided to go under the knife and have my sagging bust lifted and reduced.

It was a long and emotional road that led me to a private hospital in London - and perhaps that's why, when I woke up after the operation, groggy and swathed in bandages, I could hardly bear to think about what lay beneath the wrappings on my chest.

Would I have the breasts I had dreamed of for so long, or could something have gone horribly wrong?

When my surgeon first came to sit on the end of the bed so he could examine his work, I told him I didn't want to see.

He undid the bandages and examined me, while I looked the other way.

It remained that way for four days until the bandages finally had to come off. I was more nervous than I've ever been about anything.

I'd been meticulous about my research and knew exactly what risks were involved with these sorts of procedure, and at that moment, I expected the worst.

As my surgeon, Dr Kirwan, unravelled the bandage, I was anticipating heavy scarring, dried blood, asymmetrical nipples - not to mention asymmetrical breasts.

My only thought was: 'What have I done to myself?'

My relationship with my breasts has never been a particularly easy one.

It's ironic, really. I spent most of my teenage years willing my breasts to grow. Oh, how I prayed!

I was as flat as a pancake and seriously struggled to fit into the 32AA bra my mum presented me with on my 12th birthday. I felt so embarrassed.

Little did I know then that my breasts would continue to embarrass me, in one way or another, for much of my life.

Then out of the blue - when I reached about 17 - I vaguely noticed they had grown and I was now able to occupy a 'C' cup bra, which was more normal than I could ever have hoped for.

What I noticed even then, though, was that whenever they were let out of their bindings in a bra, my breasts showed a distinct lack of elasticity and failed to bounce back into position.

Instead, they would fall out and remain 'fallen' - way down my chest.

I have no idea why this is.

My mother has nice breasts even now - although of course she never breastfed, finding the idea repulsive. My breasts have always looked best caged up in a brassiere.

As the years rolled by, I put on some weight and by the time I was 21 I was quite a hefty ten-and-a-half stone.

I probably went up to a D cup. I lost the weight, but didn't give much thought to my breasts.

It's ironic, of course. By this time I was starting my TV career and discovering that it is actually really tough being blonde and having good-sized breasts (however much you may snigger).

Just about every comment that was ever made about me was about my appearance. I was always associated with being sexy, or 'a corker'.

It was strange for me because my breasts were never a source of delight for me.

In my mind, they weren't sexual objects, or even sources of comfort - they were just there.

In 1988, I remember being stunned - and excited - when a friend confided that she'd had a breast reduction.



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Ulrika spent 20 years hating her breasts and

I had no idea you could have such an operation, but she showed me the results. Her breasts still bore the scars and she told me she'd lost sensation in one nipple, which is apparently quite common.

Did it put me off, though? No, it planted the seed in my mind that I could one day do the same.

It might sound crazy, but even at that stage I hated my breasts - a fact that was made worse when during my first pregnancy in 1994 I went up to an FF cup.

When the milk came in after Cameron was born, I hit a G. Buying bras became a dreadful chore.

Not only were my breasts heavy, causing me backache, but the bra straps left deep, painful indentations on my shoulders.

People couldn't stop looking at them - it's hard for people to look anywhere else when your chest enters the room two seconds before you do - and, worst of all, they revolted me.

Now, I'm not stupid. We all know that men are either breast men or bottom men, and maybe I encountered some who fell into the first category.

And, I confess, I've had them partially on display. It was all the rage in the Nineties with the Wonderbra (not that it ever came in my size!).

But I felt very self-conscious when anyone looked at my chest. I felt I could never win with clothes.

If I wore anything clingy, it looked as if I was putting them on display. If I covered up, I just looked huge.

Breastfeeding caused massive changes to my breasts, too.

After nine months of feeding Cameron, mine sagged some way down my chest. I kept them in a bra, which is against my natural instinct.

I am Swedish and when we go sunbathing we like to do so topless, because it is practical and quite liberating.

The last time I recall going topless, though, was six years ago, on a yacht in the South of France, purely induced by consumption of rose wine.

I look back at the photos, which were printed on the front page of The Sun, and cringe.

Three more babies followed Cameron, each one bringing huge personal joy, but taking a heavy toll on my breasts.

After Martha, five years ago, I worked hard to lose the baby weight, but was reduced to tears in the changing room of Harvey Nichols as I tried to buy a bikini.

The bottoms all fitted, but my breasts had been so stretched and emptied that they resembled ping-pong balls in swing bin liners.

I called a friend from behind the curtain, sobbing and ranting about how I wanted a breast reduction and lift. Suddenly, my mind was made up: I would do it.

Then life, as ever, got in the way. My second marriage broke down and divorce and depression took over.

When I started dating my third husband, Brian Monet, the old issues resurfaced.

I kept my bra on all the time with him, even in bed.

I'm sure my feelings towards my breasts were made worse because I was surrounded by an increasing number of women who'd opted for breast implants.

Everywhere you look, women have breasts which are a perfect shape and barely move a millimetre - even if the women hang upside down.

So when I got pregnant a couple of years ago for the fourth and final time, with my darling Malcolm, I made it clear to Brian that he would be paying for a breast lift in the near future.

I gained a thumping five stone while pregnant. As I breastfed, my cup size soared to an incredible 34I cup (yes, they do exist, but you have to look on the internet).

This time, there was no going back. I was going down the surgery route.

It was a huge decision, of course, and for me it was important that it was less about cosmetic surgery and more about reconstructive surgery.

I wanted to repair what Mother Nature had inflicted on me during years of child-bearing and child-rearing.

Aesthetic cosmetic surgery is done to 'enhance the patient's already normal appearance'.

But reconstructive surgery is performed to 'improve function and to restore normalcy' - and I felt the latter was most relevant to my breasts.

I know resorting to any kind of surgery is seen as attempting to reverse the ageing process, and there is an element of truth in that.

But is it so wrong to want to look and feel better about yourself? Now that I've been through it, I'm convinced it was the right thing for me to do.

I started by seeing several surgeons and knew how important it was to ask all the right questions (other than 'when can you do it?').

I was informed by one that there was a 50 per cent chance of losing sensation in my nipples and, in the worst case scenario, my nipples might 'die' because they would have to be resited during the operation and might not then have an adequate blood supply.

At the beginning of February, I had an appointment with Professor Laurence Kirwan, one of the world's leading surgeons.

I know you read stories about women falling in love with their cosmetic surgeons. I can't say I did, but there was something incredibly charming about him. He was so positive.

He didn't ask me why I wanted to have the surgery - that much was obvious - nor did he make me feel I had to justify having the procedures.

We looked at dates, and he told me he could operate in four weeks' time.

The procedure we settled on was two-fold: a 'Reduction Mammoplasty' (breast reduction from a 32E to C) and a Mastopexy (breast lift), which, in surgeon-speak, 'reduces skin, sub-cutaneous fat and gland tissue, after which the breasts are reshaped'.

As far as the overall scarring was concerned, he also talked about some new stitches which would leave only minimal scarring.

The procedures costs around £6,000 plus hospital fees, and Prof Kirwan told me it would take about four hours under a general anaesthetic after which I would have an overnight stay.

I started to tell friends about what I was having done and I have to confess to wincing as I described the procedure, which involves removing the nipples, repositioning the breasts higher up and stitching them back into shape.

Ten days before the operation at the St John's & St Elizabeth's Hospital in St John's Wood, North-West London, I had to go for an ECG on my heart and a blood test to check everything was fine, which it was.

On the day of the op, my husband came with me, and before I knew it, I found myself in what appeared to be a scene from Nip/Tuck, with Dr Kirwan drawing on me with permanent marker.

My upper torso looked like an Air Traffic Control map.

As I kissed Brian goodbye and walked down the corridor to the theatre, I was still not nervous. This was the day I had been longing for.

No one was more surprised than me that, after the operation, I didn't feel like ripping the bandages off and having a peek.

With hindsight, I think it was just such a huge deal for me that I was overwhelmed.

I was petrified when the moment came for Dr Kirwan to remove the bandages. Brian was as nervous as I was.

The first surprise was that my breasts stayed in the same place! The old ones would have dropped down somewhere around my knees.

These ones were, well - magnificent is the only word. All I was aware of was this sound of 'Wow!' circulating around us in the room.

My new breasts were even. The nipples were smaller and - yippee! - I still had sensation in them.

The breasts were firm and, given that it was only four days after surgery, the scarring was not bad at all.

The scars underneath, hidden in the crease under the breast anyway, weren't too noticeable.

The vertical line down the centre of my breasts from the nipple downwards was virtually non-existent, even at that early stage,

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**'My new breasts were, well... magnificent is the only word'**

and the scarring around the nipple was neat and even.

The scars under my armpits - where I'd had a new procedure called Axilla-plasty - the removal of excess fat from above my breasts - were more visible, but I knew they would fade with time.

I was amazed. Brian was thrilled.

He'll hate me for saying this, but whereas he never showed the slightest interest in my 'previous' breasts, now his eyes positively lit up.

The result was remarkable. I felt humbled somehow, not sure whether to laugh or cry with joy.

The best thing is that these 'new' breasts were actually my old ones. They were technically still my breasts, but they looked nothing like them.

These were, without doubt, the breasts of a 16-year-old - and not an implant in sight!

I still didn't dare touch them, though. I only dared to look. And I still didn't feel as if I 'owned' them.

I'd been advised that I wouldn't be able to do much for the next two weeks: no driving, no lifting - not even pick up my baby.

Physically, it was difficult and I have to confess to feeling a little depressed for the following week, which is apparently quite normal, a combination of the effect of the anaesthetic, the emotions surrounding the operation and exhaustion.

Four weeks on, though, and I am finally starting to feel better, and more than anything else that my breasts are totally mine.

I'm still wearing a sports bra, and it will be some time before I feel secure going au naturel.

Besides, I don't want the skin to stretch like it did before, so I want to give them all the support I can.

I've had two check-ups with Dr Kirwan and he's delighted with the results.

He did say that now I've had my breasts done, I will see my stomach, and I don't think he was referring favourably to my post-pregnancy Winnie the Pooh pouch. Was he suggesting a tummy tuck?

But that's not for me. The thing about my new breasts is that no amount of diet or exercise could have produced them.

Dr Kirwan always quotes the line (you can make of it what you will): 'A beautiful girl is like a red 430 Ferrari: sleek and smooth and makes you want to show everybody she belongs to you.'

When I last saw him, he turned to my husband and told him he now has a Ferrari, to which Brian replied: 'Yes, I have. I've got the keys anyway, and I'm just waiting until I'm allowed to drive it.'

And at last I agree with Dr Kirwan: I used to be a Volvo, now I am a Ferrari. And I can't wait to hit the road.

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