



A Good Swimsuit Is Really Hard to Find (After a Mastectomy)

Breast cancer survivor Susan Scheid wanted to get on with living—and that included swimming. But she couldn't find a suit to fit.



Lands' End's latest take on its Tugless Tank is lined and braless, suitable for women like Susan Scheid (top) who don't use breast forms after a mastectomy. (\$40; landsend.com)


SHOPPING FOR A SWIMSUIT is no one's favorite activity. Now imagine doing it after a mastectomy, and you'll understand what lawyer Susan Scheid was up against.

After her bilateral surgery three and a half years ago, Scheid (who performs contract and regulatory work for non-profit health organizations) decided against breast reconstruction. "I wanted to be freed of medical intervention as quickly as possible and just get on with my life," she says. She doesn't use prosthetic devices, either. A small-breasted woman, she'd never fooled with bust-related "contraptions": "Why start now?"

Since Scheid's usual style was easy and loose-fitting, her wardrobe didn't change much—but swimsuits, she says, were "the last clothing frontier." She ordered one after another from catalogs; none fit. She'd always liked Lands' End, but its mastectomy suits all had pockets for breast forms. Scheid was forced to improvise by

buying regular tank suits and cutting out the shelf bras. "Although they fit pretty well, they felt makeshift. You want to feel normal after surgery. Having to doctor your swimsuit reminds you that you aren't recognized as a normal body type. It reminds you of loss."

Scheid didn't quit. For two years she made her case to Lands' End, calling the company's customer service and writing letters to its president, and at last the swimwear design team there offered to customize suits for her (no bra, no pockets, minimal gathering at the bust)—free of charge. The suits are "flattering even for the flat-chested 58-year-old dame that I am," she wrote to the company's president in a letter of thanks last spring.

The happy upshot: Earlier this year Lands' End began offering its Tugless Tank in a lined, braless version. "Just because you have a different shape, you shouldn't have to give up looking good," says Scheid, who's just ordered one of the new suits—in hot pink. 

EVERYBODY (STYLISHLY) IN THE POOL

Dismal granny-esque swimsuits with skirts are no longer the sole postsurgery choice. Sexier, younger-looking styles are definitely out there, says Barbara Zarrell, a former oncology nurse whose Web site, womanspersonalhealth.com, is a prime source of products for those undergoing breast surgery, chemo, and radiation. Although mastectomy suits sometimes require higher-cut necklines and armholes, they're distinguished mainly by two inner pockets for breast forms, which come in a range of materials and prices.

Breezy one-shoulder tank is done in a hip smoky-swirly print with an appealing "wet" look. (Amoena, \$90; amoena.us for stores)



Diagonal stripes help any body look slimmer, and this cool, op art-ish design is no exception. (Amoena, \$106; amoena.us for stores)



Even a bikini is a possibility—except the bra might be slightly more modest than usual. (Anita Care Swim, \$55 for top, \$24 for bottom; figleaves.com)

