



Early Prosthesis, the implant stretches the skin and can be filled with a sterile solution via an injection dome to act as a permanent prosthesis. It is one of the newest advances in breast reconstruction and is an appropriate alternative for about 50 percent of all mastectomy patients, says Dr. Sidney Eisenbaum, a Denver plastic surgeon. Compared with other reconstruction techniques, the Becker expander is a simple procedure and is very effective for most women, he says.

Physicians began using tissue expanders for mastectomy patients a decade ago, but the Becker expander improves on the technique. It frequently eliminates the need for a follow-up surgical procedure, since it has a self-sealing valve that closes off the injection dome when the implant has been fully expanded. Otherwise, doctors would have to perform an additional operation to remove the tissue expander and insert a permanent breast implant.

A physician can remove the dome and filling tube in a simple procedure done in the office using a local anesthetic. The Becker implant offers the choice of appropriate reconstruction and at a lower cost than other procedures. In many cases, says Eisenbaum, the device can be inserted during the mastectomy operation.

### Nondrug AIDS Aid

Eight patients with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and AIDS-related complex who were treated with a new nondrug technique called bio-stimulation showed improvements in key areas of immune function, according to a report by the company's developer, Shiro, of the Kikkawa Inc.

The technique involves exposure to low-level magnetic and electric stimulation in combination with phototherapy from the visible light spectrum. In the past 17 months, the company has tested the technique on eight patients for five to 60 weeks. Results included clearing of infections and improvements in blood test results in almost all subjects. In almost 4,500 total hours of exposure, no adverse effects have occurred.

The Cupertino, Calif., firm plans to conduct two more studies of the technique's clinical efficacy, the first to begin this month at a San Francisco hospital. That controlled study will involve 24 patients with AIDS-related complex. In the second, an animal study at

the University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, researchers will investigate effects of bio-stimulation on cats infected with an AIDS-like virus.

### Weaker Coffee Link

Coffee drinkers take heart. Caffeine may keep some people awake long past bedtime and make others jittery, but recent research suggests that a coffee habit will not increase the risk of heart disease.

That news flash from a Hawaiian study of heart disease contradicts previous findings. Researchers gathered and analyzed information from 7,194 Japanese men — 6,055 were coffee drinkers — over a period of 15 years. Although initially the data seemed to indicate a relationship between coffee consumption and increased risk of heart disease, says Dr. Katsuhiko Yano of the Honolulu Heart Program, the association turned out to be false.

If the relationship were a true one, Yano explains, the risk of heart disease would increase with increased coffee consumption. Instead researchers discovered that if they included other risk factors, such as smoking, in the analysis, the association between coffee drinking and heart disease disappeared. This led them to believe that the apparent correlation between coffee and increased risk for heart disease actually could be a result of the tendency of coffee drinkers to also smoke cigarettes.

The analysis was conducted in reply to a study published last year in *The England Journal of Medicine*, in which researchers from Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions in Baltimore found that coffee drinking appeared to at least double the risk of heart disease.

— Katie Tyndall

### Tracking Teen Suicide

One of every 12 inner-city teenagers interviewed in a recent large-scale study reported a suicide attempt, and running away from home was one of several signs of a suicidal tendency.

Sociologist Jay Gidycz, who interviewed nearly 1,000 inner-city teens aged 15-19, says that his surprise in finding a high incidence of suicide attempts among 13- to 19-year-olds. Robert L. Professor of sociology in psychology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, says suicide tends to be far more prevalent among inner-city teens with repeated histories of hospitalizations, such as resulting from drug abuse, sexual abuse or physical injury.

Particularly about the 1980s, teen drug, traumatic events, such as being involved in fatal car accidents, suicide attempt. In fact, 25 percent of teenage girls who had been hospitalized trying to kill themselves within a year, while 15 percent of girls arrested and hospitalized for drug abuse.

Among Americans 13 to 19 years old, the rate of suicide attempts is 1.5 percent.

### Becker Expander

A thick, flexible implant placed beneath the skin in breast reconstruction alternative for mastectomy patients who do not want to subject themselves to further surgery following the removal of a breast.

Called the Becker Expander/Mam-



Coffee-heart disease tie is loosened?