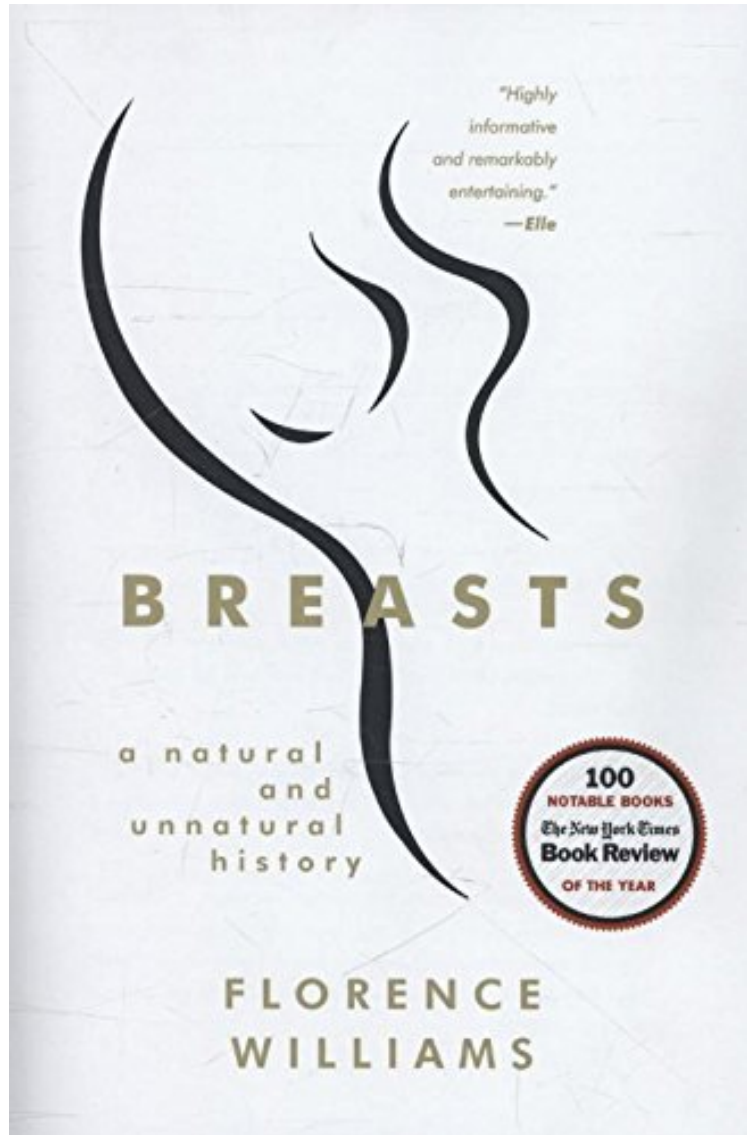


Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History

Florence Williams

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Florence Williams : Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History:

23 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Humorous Treatise on Breast Functions and Diseases By D_shrink The author discusses a very serious subject, in that most of book is devoted to breast cancer and its primary cause according to her which is carcinogens in the environment. Yet she approaches her subject in a humorous manner from the first page, beginning with, "We love breasts, yet we can't take them seriously. We name them affectionately,

but with a bit of insult. They can turn both babies and grown men into lunkheads."She begins with a history of how and why breasts developed in lower order primates, which was originally to confer immunity to offspring from pathogens. She even has a theory that the transmission of culture occurs from the bonding between mother and child during breast feeding. Yet she easily slips back and forth between information and humor as in discussing the fat percentage of milk in various species as with the seal which has the highest fat content [50%] of any mammal, to which she adds. " a stiff wind could turn that into butter."The book is filled with hundreds of informative and often amusing facts relating to breasts and breast feeding, as:

1. the average female breast weighs about 454 grams or one pound
2. the largest breasts created through augmentation were a size 38KKK and weighed approximately 21 pounds each with a volume equal to approximately 2.6 gallons.
3. the left breast is about 9% larger in most women, but one is always about that much bigger
4. the average nipple has 12 orifices
5. Timmie Jean Lindsay was the first recipient of a breast transplant in 1962. She was still alive at the time the book was written at age 79 and still had her original transplants. The story of how she got them is cute so I won't spoil that part.
6. a stripper in TX had her implants for a period of time long enough to have the silicone harden. In a dispute with a partner she was shot in the chest but had the bullet deflected off her hardened implants saving her life.
7. human breast milk sells for 4.00/ounce
8. the breast is composed of three types of things: glandular tissue, fat cells, and stroma. The % of fat increases with age, making the breast tissue less dense.

This section of the book is also quite informative and more detailed than the minor fact I just mentioned. All in all a very informative and well written humor book on the subject, which is not to minimize the author's quite serious attempt to make her feelings known that she is a proponent of the belief that man-made environment carcinogens are a major cause of breast cancer which is the primary theme of the book. Well worth the read on several levels.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good reading
By Kathleen Kelley
Good reading for someone like myself who has been through breast cancer. survivors it along to a friend who also survived breast cancer and she has also passed it along. This is a book for everyone, not just cancer survivors. It is written with a sense of humor too.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Role of Breasts
By Andrew
In Western culture, at least, breasts play a curious role. Despite existing primarily for feeding babies, breasts have been sexualized and fetishized. However, in *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History*, the author takes a more serious look at breasts and their role in human development and how modern lifestyles may be contributing to breast cancer. One of the first subjects explored in the book is the evolutionary history and why human breasts look so different from mammary glands in other mammals. The difference may be attributable to the shape of the human head. With a larger brain and a changing shape, nipples had to protrude further from the mother's chest so a baby could feed and breathe at the same time. Thus, human breasts evolved to be large during a woman's entire adult life, unlike other mammals which only expand while lactating. The author points this out in how the development of breasts is so interconnected with overall human development and intelligence. Another thing looked at is the often bizarre history of breast implants. According to the book, breast augmentation is the most popular voluntary surgery performed in the United States. Breast feeding and breast milk are also explained such as how complicated and important the makeup of milk is. She also compares milk to formula and how changing opinions caused a severe drop in the percentage of mothers breast feeding in the mid-twentieth century and how later on women were instead encouraged to breast feed again. A good portion of the book is spent looking at breast diseases, especially cancer, and how a changing environment and culture may be altering how breasts develop in young girls. The author notes how girls are beginning to develop breasts earlier in industrialized countries. She also notes how the number of breast cancer cases is also increasing. Some reasons why are explored including a more modern lifestyle, number of children and pregnancies, and exposure to modern products which contain chemicals whose effects are not entirely known. A whole chapter of the book is dedicated at looking at the rare male form of breast cancer. Men are susceptible to breast cancer because all men have a small amount of (undeveloped) breast tissue for the same reason they have nipples. My only real criticism of the book is that in some sections where the author looks at various chemicals and everyday products with such chemicals seems at times alarmist and the author comes off as rather anxious over it. The long-winded lists of chemicals and various statistics also seemed rather out-of-place at times. I mostly enjoyed this book because it was a mostly serious look at a subject that is too often appreciated for the wrong reasons. I would recommend this book to those with a casual interest in biology or physiology.

An engaging narrative about an incredible, life-giving organ and its imperiled modern fate. Did you know that breast milk contains substances similar to cannabis? Or that its sold on the Internet for 262 times the price of oil? Feted and fetishized, the breast is an evolutionary masterpiece. But in the modern world, the breast is changing. Breasts are getting bigger, arriving earlier, and attracting newfangled chemicals. Increasingly, the odds are stacked against us in the struggle with breast cancer, even among men. What makes breasts so mercurial and so vulnerable? In this informative and highly entertaining account, intrepid science reporter Florence Williams sets out to uncover the latest scientific findings from the fields of anthropology, biology, and medicine. Her investigation follows the life cycle of the breast from puberty to pregnancy to menopause, taking her from a plastic surgeons office where she learns about the importance of cup size in Texas to the laboratory where she discovers the presence of environmental toxins in her

own breast milk. The result is a fascinating exploration of where breasts came from, where they have ended up, and what we can do to save them. 12 illustrations

From Booklist*Starred * In her exceptional history, science journalist Williams does more to enlighten us on the virtues of, workings of, and perils to women's breasts than anyone ever has before, notwithstanding the efforts of the three Hs: Hooters, Hefner, and Hughes (Howard, inventor of the cantilever bra). And she does it with smarts, sass, and intent. Her book can be characterized as an exposé because it unveils the scandalously scanty amount of research devoted to those that define the very essence of the human race. To be sure, Williams covers all the cultural and anthropological information that the mostly male scientific and not-so-scientific community has gathered about what is euphemistically referred to as second base. And she goes much further, elucidating the primary purpose of the female breast and how breasts alter at each stage of a woman's life, then venturing into breast enlargements, the chemistry of breast milk, how breasts are evolving, and how little we know about the effects of environmental toxins and the rise in breast cancer. Meant to nurture the next generation for life on planet earth, breasts are also humanity's first responders to environmental changes. And what have modern-day chemical exposures wrought? The answers to this question and many more are found in Williams' remarkably informative and compelling work of discovery. --Donna Chavez

Florence Williams's double-D talents as a reporter and writer lift this book high above the genre and separate it from the ranks of ordinary science writing. Breasts is illuminating, surprising, clever, important. Williams is an author to savor and look forward to. --Mary Roach Be brave, buy this book, and withstand the giggles and sniggers of your friends. For here is a wonderful history, stretching across hundreds of millions of years, of an astonishingly complex part of the human body. Williams weaves together research on nutrition, cancer, psychology, and even structural engineering to create a fascinating portrait of the breast: that singular gland that gave us, as mammals, our very name. --Carl Zimmer, author of Parasite Rex and Evolution: The Triumph of an Idea Akin to Rachel Carson's 1962 classic *Silent Spring*. --M. G. Lord In her comprehensive 'environmental history' of the only human body part without its own medical specialty, ... Williams focuses on the importance of understanding breasts as more than sex objects... Williams puts hard data and personal history together with humor, creating an evenhanded cautionary tale that will both amuse and appall. Exceptional. Starred exceptional history... with smarts, sass, and intent.... Meant to nurture the next generation for life on planet Earth, breasts are also humanity's first responders to environmental changes. And what have modern-day chemical exposures wrought? The answers to this question and many more are found in Williams' remarkably informative and compelling work of discovery. Williams has done us all--men and women--an enormous favor. With a scientist's mind, a journalist's eye, and a mother's heart, Williams has produced a wide-ranging environmental history of the breast... Williams delineates one of the most consequential dramas at the intersection of human evolution and environmental change. Much like [Mary Roach's] *Stiff*, *Breasts* benefits from its author's field trips... Seen this way--the breast as a canary in a toxic coal mine--[Williams's] call to protect them feels both timely and urgent. A smart, wry synthesis of evolution, physiology, microbiology, environmental science, and even biomechanics. --Carl Zimmer" Akin to Rachel Carson's 1962 classic *Silent Spring*. --M. G. Lord "Exceptional. "Starred . Meant to nurture the next generation for life on planet Earth, breasts are also humanity's first responders to environmental changes. And what have modern-day chemical exposures wrought? The answers to this question and many more are found in Williams's remarkably informative and compelling work of discovery. "Williams has done us all men and women an enormous favor. "With a scientist's mind, a journalist's eye, and a mother's heart, Williams has produced a wide-ranging environmental history of the breast Williams delineates one of the most consequential dramas at the intersection of human evolution and environmental change. "Highly informative and remarkably entertaining. . . . [Williams's] inquisitive tone deftly melds careful reportage and a witty streak of lay skepticism. "Much like [Mary Roach's] *Stiff*, *Breasts* benefits from its author's field trips. Seen this way the breast as a canary in a toxic coal mine [Williams's] call to protect them feels both timely and urgent. "A wonderful and entertaining tour through the evolution, biology and cultural aspects of the organ that defines us as mammals! --Susan Love, M.D., M.B.A., President of Dr. Susan L"

About the Author Florence Williams is a journalist and contributing editor to *Outside* magazine. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *National Geographic* among others. Her first book, *Breasts: A Natural and Unnatural History*, was a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2012 and the winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in Science and Technology. Williams lives in Washington, DC.