

WHAT TO EXPECT FOLLOWING MASTECTOMY AND IMMEDIATE RECONSTRUCTION WITH TISSUE EXPANDERS OR IMPLANTS

Before Your Surgery

- 1 week before your surgery, please stop taking the following medications:
 - NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve, Naproxen, etc as these can increase your risk of bleeding during and after surgery.
 - Aspirin and any Aspirin containing medications
 - Cold medications that contain Aspirin or NSAIDs
 - Multivitamins and any over the counter supplements
- Please notify your surgeon's office if you currently take any blood thinning medications such as Warfarin, Plavix, Lovenox, or Fragmin.
- Please call your surgeon's office if you have any questions regarding medications that you should/should not take before surgery.
- Please do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before your surgery. You may take any necessary medications the morning of surgery with a small sip of water.

Hospital Stay

- You will likely remain in the hospital for 1-2 days following your surgery.
- Before you are discharged from the hospital your pain will be adequately controlled with oral pain medication.
- You will be discharged with drains in place. The nurses will teach you how to empty and record your drain output and arrange a visiting nurse to see you at home as necessary.

Activity following Surgery

- No heavy lifting (greater than 10 pounds) or raising your arms above your head until your surgeon has cleared you.
- You may not drive for several weeks until you are comfortable wearing a seatbelt and have been cleared to do so.
- If you received a breast care booklet, please do not begin exercises in the booklet until you have been cleared to do so.
- Rest and take naps as needed throughout the day. You may feel tired the first few weeks after surgery.
- In order to prevent blood clots it is important to walk around as much as possible following this surgery.

Pain

- You were likely prescribed pain medications. Take them as needed for pain. As your pain decreases you will be able to decrease the use of the narcotic pain medication and control pain with Tylenol only.
- Please avoid taking NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve, etc as these can increase your risk of bleeding after surgery.

- If you were prescribed a narcotic pain medication, it can cause constipation. In order to avoid constipation, increase your fluid intake you may also need to take a stool softener such as Colace or any of the other over the counter stool softeners.
 - Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking pain medication as it can make you drowsy and impair your judgment.

Diet/Appetite

- You may resume your pre-hospital diet.
- Drink plenty of fluids, at least eight glasses of 8 ounces each day to help prevent constipation associated with pain medication.

Caring for Your Wound:

- It is normal to have some bruising and swelling for a few days after surgery.
- If your wound has oozing or drainage, you may cover it with a dry dressing. Please be sure to change it everyday.
- You will likely have a clear plastic dressing (Tegaderm) over your incisions and/or drain sites, this needs to stay on until your follow-up appointment with your Plastic Surgeon. It will be removed at that time.
- If you were provided with a Bra in the hospital, please continue to wear this at all times except while showering until your follow-up appointment.
- You will be discharged with drains and will be instructed on how to care for them. Call your plastic surgeon's office when the drainage is less than 30cc's from each drain in a 24 hr period. They are ready for removal at that time. You can expect the drains to remain in place between 1 and 2 weeks.

Medications following Surgery

- Resume your pre-hospital medications. Follow-up with your primary care physician regarding new prescriptions or refills of your home medications.
- If you were given an antibiotic, continue to take it until all of your drains are removed. Do not stop taking the antibiotic just because you feel better.
- You will remain on oral antibiotics until the all of the drains have been removed.
- Do not put any ointments or antibiotic creams on your incision. These will not make it heal faster

Follow-Up Appointment

- If you are not given a follow up appointment when you leave the hospital, call your Plastic Surgeon's office and make an appointment to be seen within 1 week after your surgery.
- At this appointment, we will check your incision and remove any drains and/or stitches. Your surgeon will also discuss the results of the surgery and your treatment plan.

Call your Plastic Surgeon's Office if:

- You have a fever greater than 101°F, chills, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, leg pain, increased incisional pain not relieved with pain medication; if you notice signs of wound infection (redness/tenderness at or purulent discharge from your incision); or if you have other concerns.
- Please call 911 or go to the closest Emergency Department for any life threatening



emergencies.

ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOLLOWING BREAST TISSUE EXPANDER/IMPLANT RECONSTRUCTION

What does a reconstruction with a tissue expander or implant mean?

This type of reconstruction refers to placing a temporary tissue expander or a permanent implant behind your chest wall to assist with breast reconstruction following mastectomy. If you have an expander in place, fluid will be periodically injected into the expander over a course of several weeks. This allows the skin and chest wall to stretch so that it can accommodate a permanent implant.

If you have a permanent implant placed at the time of your mastectomy, this permanent implant will not need to be filled over time. The plastic surgeon places the expander or the implant partially under part of your chest muscle (the pectoralis) and closes the skin. It takes about six weeks for a pocket to form around the expander/implant so use of your arm is somewhat protected until the pocket has formed. Ultimately we expect you to return to full function.

What precautions do I have immediately following this surgery?

Typically there will be a drain in place to drain fluid from your chest. Because of the healing required right after surgery, your guidelines are:

- Leave the dressing on until they are removed in the office
- You may shower when approved by your plastic surgeon
- Avoid tub bathing until the sutures are well healed, usually 3 weeks
- You may begin to gently work on regaining your arm motion when cleared by your plastic surgeon
- You may begin a regular walking program as soon as you feel able, but do not break a sweat
- Be mindful of your posture while you are healing
- Try not to be round shouldered or in a slouched posture

When may I resume my favorite activities?

Because we all heal at a different rate, you should check with your surgeon for any specific considerations for you. In general, one of the best rules of thumb is to pace yourself and gradually work back into resuming your typical lifestyle. It is important not to put too much stretch or force through your chest muscles too soon, so any activity that feels forceful or painful should be avoided. The timeframes below can serve as a guide for you.

These are guidelines considering your implants. Other restrictions may be in place because of other treatments you are having, so feel free at any time to consult with your surgeon or nurse with any questions that you may have.

At six weeks it is safe to :

- Lift up to 10 pounds
- Continue walking program
- Work on regaining full shoulder motion
- Resume driving if you are not taking narcotics for pain
- Gradually resume intercourse
- Use a stationary bike
- Perform light housework such as sweeping, ironing
- Participate in Tai Chi

At eight-ten weeks it is safe to:

- Lift up to 20 pounds
- Begin yoga
- Start Pilates (no arm gripping)
- Start to run
- Hike
- Begin riding a bike outside
- Perform moderate housework such as scrubbing floors, bathroom, vacuuming
- Perform moderate yard work such as raking, weeding
- Chip and putt with a golf club

At twelve-sixteen weeks it is safe to:

- Lift up to 25 pounds
- Swim
- Begin playing tennis
- Fully participate in golf
- Use machines in the gym, lightly
- Use a rowing machine
- Kayak
- Sail, but not pull lines

At sixteen weeks it is safe to:

- Gradually progress to unrestricted lifting
- Gym activities as you wish (including chest presses and lat pull downs?)
- Gradually resume full Pilates
- Downhill and cross country ski
- Fully participate in tennis
- Play volleyball and softball
- Hike as you wish
- Rock climb
- Sailing as you wish

- Perform heavy household chores
- Perform heavy yard work
- Shovel snow

Are there any activities I should always avoid?

- You should always refrain from exposing your surgical scars to sunlight. If that is unavoidable, use very strong sun block.
- It may take several months for you to feel as strong as you would like, but our goal is for you to be able to return to being as active as you would like to be.
- Always use common sense, and let your body be your guide. If your body says "don't do" something, respect that message.