

Postoperative Instructions

The following are some general guidelines for you to help assist in your recovery after breast surgery. Please keep in mind that everyone recovers in different ways, so please call if you have any questions.

general guidelines

- Listen to your body and rest when you feel tired.
- You should experience mild to moderate discomfort once the anesthetic has worn off.
- You will have a good support bra placed on you after the surgery. It is a good idea to wear this bra day and night for 2–3 days (or longer) after surgery. This helps immobilize the breast and will help alleviate discomfort. If the breast does not move very much, it will not hurt as much.

medications

- You will be given a prescription for a narcotic pain medication. Some patients will experience very little discomfort and will not require this narcotic. You may take Tylenol™ or extra-strength Tylenol™ (acetaminophen) instead. I would prefer that you AVOID aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil™), Excedrin™, Celebrex™.
- The narcotic pain medication can cause constipation so it is important to keep well-hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. You should not consume any alcohol while you are taking narcotics. If you are constipated, you may take an over-the-counter stool softener (Colace).

activity

- You may resume most daily activities the day after surgery.
- For mastectomy patients, arm exercises can begin 2–3 days after surgery. It is important to start off slowly and gradually increase your range of motion. If you have a drain in place, it is important to be cautious and perform only very light exercise – and minimize any significant amount of repetitive activity. Too much activity can increase the amount of time that the drain needs to stay in. If you have had breast reconstruction, you need to check with the plastic surgeon regarding when you can start the exercises.
- You can drive only when you are pain free, can react to an emergency situation AND when you are not taking any narcotics.
- You should not lift anything over 5 pounds on the affected side or any other strenuous activity such as exercise until you have cleared it with me.

wound care

- You should keep the dressings on the incision for *at least 24 hours* after surgery. After that time you may remove the dressings and shower. After your shower, pat the incision dry. Do not apply any creams or ointments.
- You should not take tub baths or do any swimming.
- You will find steri-strips on the incision when you remove the dressing. Please do not remove these steri-strips—they will usually peel off within 10 days. If they have not come off by then, you may slowly peel them off.
- The incision is closed with absorbable sutures that are under the skin. Therefore, you will not have to have any sutures removed in the office.
- You may experience some minor swelling and numbness along the incision.

drain care

- If you have had an axillary dissection or mastectomy, you will have drains placed at the time of surgery. You will go home with these drains as they usually are required for 5–10 days.
- You will need to empty the drain and strip the tubing 3–4 times per day. Stripping the drain prevents it from becoming clogged. If the bulb fills up sooner, you will need to empty it then. You should measure and record the output of the drain every time you empty it.
- You should squeeze the bulb of the drain when you close the cap. This provides vacuum for the drain to work.
- The drain is usually ready to be removed when the drain output is less than 30 cc over a 24 hour period (for 2 days)

pathology results

- I will call you once I have received the pathology results—this usually takes 3 days.

follow-up appointment

- I would like to see you in the office 7-10 days after your surgery. Please call 630 961 4177 to schedule this appointment.