

BREAST SURGERY POST OPERATIVE CARE – HOSPITAL STAY

Medications

There are 5 medications you may be required to take before and after surgery:

1. Antibiotic
2. Pain Medication—remember this medication might make you feel groggy and constipated and cannot be mixed with alcohol
3. Muscle relaxant
4. Emend
5. Colace

Drains

You may have drains placed during your surgery. There are usually 1-2 drains. It is necessary to record total daily output for each drain. When the drain is near full, empty the contents into a measuring cup and record the amount in ml (equal to cc). You can also use the drain bulb itself that has markings to measure the output. (One teaspoon is equal to 5 cc; one ounce is equal to 30 cc.)

Strip the drain tubing 3 times per day. If the drain requires emptying more than once per day, enter the daily total in the appropriate space on the *Drain Record Sheet*. When your drain output is less than 25 cc in 24 hours for two days in a row, that drain will likely be removed in the office. We use silastic drains, which reduce any discomfort during removal of the drain. The small opening that will remain in the skin will seal in 24-48 hours. This opening may have a small amount of drainage, and should be covered with antibiotic ointment and dry gauze until it seals closed.

Incision Care

Most of your incisions have absorbable sutures that are hidden underneath the skin. Sometimes you might feel a small knot come up in the incision area. Do not worry; this can sometimes happen and will be removed during your office visit.

You will have surgical strips and tape over your incisions. Do not remove this tape. If the skin becomes irritated or starts to itch, apply antibiotic ointment to the area. The tape corners may be trimmed if they lift up. Take extra care when trimming as you may not have normal sensation in this area.

Showering

You will be able to shower three days after surgery. Baths can be resumed one month after surgery and swimming 8 weeks after surgery.

To shower, remove all gauze, leave the tape on your skin. Soap, water and shampoo can run over the tape. When you get out of the shower, gently dab the tape and operated area dry. Apply ointment to drain sites, cover with clean gauze and replace the surgical garment.

Swelling

After surgery, the operated area will feel swollen, especially at the end of the day. This is normal and usually takes at least a month or more to resolve.

Surgical garments

You will go home with a post-surgical garment.

Activities

After discharge, you should limit your activity for 7-10 days. Limiting activity to 20 minutes limits swelling. Swelling can adversely affect your healing by increasing risks of infection, pain and poor scarring. **Each 20 minutes of activity should be followed by two hours of rest with your legs elevated.**

For three weeks following surgery, do not raise your arm on the operated side above your shoulder. Of course, no lifting anything heavier than 5 pounds for the first month. After three weeks, you may gradually resume your exercise regimen and begin to perform arm stretches.

Sleep Position

You should sleep on your back for at least 6 weeks. Use multiple pillows to keep you from changing position when you are asleep.

Driving

You may start driving after you have stopped all your pain medication and your drains are removed. It is best to wait at least 2 weeks after surgery for street driving, in order to feel confident. You should wait three weeks before driving on Los Angeles Freeways.

Work

You will be able to return back to a desk job, or light duty at 2-3 weeks after surgery. Be mindful that this should be gradual because you will feel more tired and lack the normal reserve of energy.

Scars and Massage

After the incisions have completely healed, you can start applying pressure massage to the incisions to improve the appearance of the scars. Remember that for the first 6 months, your scars will remain red but with time, they will turn lighter as they mature.

Smoking

ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING for 4 weeks prior to and 6 weeks after surgery (this includes staying out of the room with smokers).

Emotional Support

The recovery period may be very difficult. Mood swings and emotions can be overwhelming. Contact our office for assistance in finding one of the many support groups available.

Mammograms

If you had breast surgery, you should wait at least six months for a routine mammogram. If you have concerns about an area, please call our office for an appointment.

DURING HOSPITALIZATION:

INSTRUCTIONS: Your initial medical care following surgery will be provided by the nursing staff in the hospital. All of the postoperative orders will be written by Dr. Grunwald.

POST OPERATIVE LINES: When you awaken after surgery an intravenous (IV) line, drains, and possibly a catheter will be in place. The IV (and the catheter, if present) will probably be removed in 1-3 days. The drains will probably be removed in 5-10 days (after you have been discharged from the hospital).

PAIN: Discomfort will be treated with injections, intravenous or oral pain medication depending on need.

OTHER MEDICATIONS: In some cases which involve making blood vessel connections, medications are sometimes used to help prevent blood clots from forming in the repaired vessels. These are usually given for 4-5 days after surgery.

NAUSEA: Dr. Grunwald will prescribe appropriate medication if nausea is a problem.

ACTIVITY: The nursing staff will assist you with early walking. One of the main benefits of early ambulation is that the incidence of deep vein thrombosis (blood clots) is reduced.

DIET: You will be progressed to a regular diet as tolerated.

MONITORING: For procedures in which the blood supply to a flap is dependent on reanastomosed blood vessels, hourly monitoring of the blood flow may be performed for 2-3 days. Should a problem be detected, this can allow possible correction by repeat limited surgeries before necrosis occurs.