

Breast Surgery Post-surgery booklet For Female Patients

This booklet will provide basic information about expectation after breast surgery and care at home after discharge from hospital



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Breast Surgery

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After Surgery You May:

- Feel nauseated (feeling of having to throw-up), or vomit
- Feel tired
- Feel some pain or uneasiness
- Have some bruising or tenderness where the incision (cut made during surgery) is. You may notice this a few days after surgery. This can last for some time
- A change of feeling or less feeling (numbness) in the breast and under arm that had surgery
- Swelling around the area where you had surgery. Sometime this can feel like a ball under your arm.
- Stiffness in your arm on the side of the body where you had surgery
- Urine (pee) that looks blue due to the blue dye for about 2 days if you had a sentinel node biopsy.

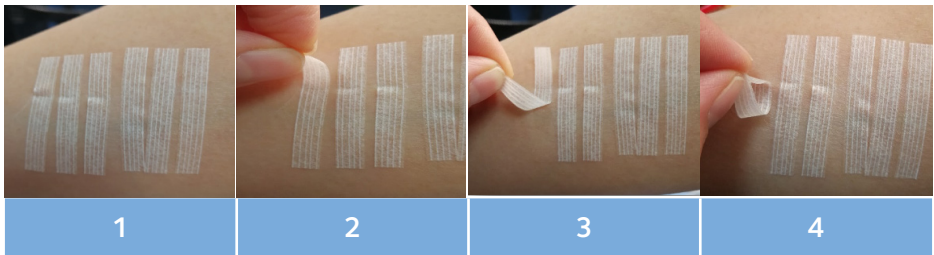
Most of side effects can last up to couple of weeks.

These tips will help you in recovery:

- Gradually resume daily activities
- Stay active and move around after surgery to prevent complications and to avoid blood clots in your leg veins
- Take your prescribed pain medication if you feel it is difficult to move around.
- Use your arm normally for daily activities such as bathing, changing clothes, cooking
- Don't lift and carry heavy objects for 3-6 weeks
- Don't push or pull anything with arm on surgery side at least for two weeks
- Drink plenty of fluids
- You can eat normally. But increase fluid intake and add fruits and vegetables to your meal to avoid constipation
- Do regular arm exercise and use your spirometry regularly
- You can resume driving 3-4 weeks after surgery
- You can use deodorants, moisturizers and perfumes but avoid direct contact on the incision site
- Underarm care and hygienic care can be resumed after surgery

Care for Wound:

- Outer dressing is removed before discharge or you can remove the outer dressing at home and change it.
- Don't remove steri-strips (paper tapes) and leave them on for 14 days. If it falls before 14 days it is fine but if it remains attached more than 14 days you can remove it by pulling it towards the incision (see the below figure).
- You can take shower/sponge bath 48 hrs after surgery or as instructed by surgeon
- Keep wound dry and clean
- Wash wound gently with mild soap after consulting your doctor or clinical nurse specialist
- Stitches in your wound are buried and dissolvable and do not need to be removed



Care for Drain:

If you have a drain. Follow the instruction below until your drain is removed

- Wash hands thoroughly before caring for your drain
- Try to keep drain dressing clean and dry, if the dressing is unclean or area becomes wet after a shower, you can change the dressing after cleaning the site with Betadine
- Secure the drain in drain-bag while walking or engaged in other activities
- Empty the drain twice a day. Measure the amount of fluid you removed each time and write it on piece of paper. Squeeze the drain while putting the cap back of to start the suction again
- You must bring these measurements to your clinic appointment

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- The drain will be removed after the amount of fluid is reduced in the clinic by your doctor or clinical nurse specialist
- If the drainage stops suddenly, it may be blocked, try milking the drain a few times to clear the blockage
- If the fluids come out where the drain exits your skin, pat it dry, cover the place with gauze or clean towel and inform your clinical nurse specialist
- If the drain falls out accidentally, do not panic. Cover the site where the drain left the skin with gauze. Inform your clinical nurse specialist

Pectoral Demonstration of Drain Evacuating:



1
Wash your hands
thoroughly



2
Hold the drain firmly
in both hands



3
Fold the tube while
holding firmly



4
Open the cap of the
drain from this
specific side



5
Add the content into a
measuring cup



6
Measure the content
using measuring cup
and record it



7
Wipe the cap nicely



8
Press firmly to
remove all the air
from the bag and
close the cap

Pain

- You may have sharp pain, feel pins and needles or be more sensitive on the side or your body where you had surgery
- If you feel numbness, this should get better as your nerves heal
- Don't use hot/ warm/ ice packs on your arm or near your incisions
- Gently rub or tap any sensitive places to help reduce the pain
- Take your pain medication as prescribed by your doctor
- Take pain medication half an hour before starting your arm exercise

Bleeding

- It is normal to have small amount of blood at the operation site
- Some bruising and discoloration are also normal, it will resolve with time
- Call your clinical nurse specialist if you notice a large amount of fluid or blood coming from incision site or visit emergency department

Seroma (Fluid collection around the wound)

- It is normal if some fluid builds around the wound under the skin
- It usually goes away within few weeks
- Sometimes your doctor or clinical nurse specialist may need to drain it off through simple procedure

Lymphedema

- Swelling of the arm or hand on the side of the surgery
- Sometimes this happens after your lymph nodes are removed under your arm
- You will need to see your physical therapist for your arm care and exercise to avoid swelling

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Infection

- Look for redness or swelling of incision with pus or foul-smelling drainage
- You may have a fever
- Contact emergency service if you have these symptoms
- Usually, your doctor will prescribe antibiotics to treat these infections

Wearing Bra

- If you had a lumpectomy / excision of lump only, wear a properly fitted bra with good support, without underwire, for few weeks or as instructed by surgeon
- This helps in preventing pulling on surgery site and helps in reducing swelling
- If you had a mastectomy (complete removal of breast) wear a comfortable shirt or a mastectomy camisole or camisole bra.

Breast Prosthetics:

- Right after surgery it is safe to wear a soft, foam breast prosthesis
- After mastectomy you may want to use breast prosthesis
- Breast prosthesis is an artificial external replacement of breast that has been removed
- When you have healed from surgery, you can begin to wear Silicon breast prosthesis
- For breast prosthetics talk to your clinical nurse specialist or ask your doctor to refer you to prosthetic department



Silicon prosthesis



Breast foam

Emotions:

- A change in your body image may affect your feelings about yourself
- It is common to feel a sense of loss after mastectomy; you may feel sad and emotional pain
- Sharing your feelings and getting emotional support can help your state of mind
- Wear clothes that will make you feel good

Follow-up appointment:

You will have a follow up appointment in outpatient department in surgical speciality center with clinical nurse specialist.

Contact Emergency Services if you notice any of these signs

- Nausea that does not go away
- Vomiting that does not go away
- Bleeding that does not stop in the area that had surgery
- Surgery area getting very red
- Foul smelling drainage (fluid coming out of area that had surgery)
- Pus coming out of the incision site
- Fever high than 38° C
- Your drain falls out



You can also visit these websites for more information:

Breast Cancer.org
www.breastcancer.org

Cancer Research UK
www.cancerresearchuk.org

National Comprehensive Cancer Network
www.nccn.org

UHN Patient Education
www.uhnpatienteducation.ca



Patient and Family Education

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