

Breast Surgery Post-operative Instructions

By Elizabeth Revesz, M.D.

Lumpectomy, Mastectomy, Axillary Dissection

General Instructions

The following instructions will provide helpful information that will assist your recovery. These are designed to be general guidelines. Remember, everyone recovers differently. Listen to your body and rest when you are tired. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact my staff or myself.

Restrictions

- There are no lifting weight restrictions for the arm on the surgical side. You may gradually increase the amount of weight based on your comfort level. Avoid a lot of repetitious activity with the arm until the drain is out (if one was placed) and the wound is well-healed (about two weeks).
- Do not drive a car until you believe you can react to an emergency situation and you're no longer taking narcotic pain medications.
- You may shower the day after surgery. You should not bathe or swim (ie submerge wound) until the wound is well healed (about two weeks).

Exercise

- Arm exercises (see exercise sheet) can be started within a couple days. Do these 2 or 3 times per day, beginning with light exercise and gradually increase your range of motion and repetitions. This will help your arm regain full mobility.
- A prescription for pain medication will be provided before discharge. Take this as directed to relieve pain. It is important that you be comfortable so that you may continue your stretching exercises.
- If you find the medication prescribed is too strong, try Tylenol (Acetaminophen) or Ibuprofen.

Wound Care

- The gauze dressing can be removed on the first or second postoperative day and then shower.
- You should keep gauze dressing on the wound until the wound is completely dry and without drainage-usually 1-3 days.
- If an elastic bandage was placed around your chest after the surgery you may remove it on the 1st or 2nd day after surgery. If you prefer to leave it on longer, you may.
- You may wear a bra. Sport bras are usually the most comfortable and give the best support. If the breast doesn't move it is less painful.

Drain Care (if placed at time of axillary dissection or mastectomy)

- Empty the drain and strip the tubing 2-3 times daily, more often if the plasti-squeeze bottle fills up. This will prevent the tubing from clogging.
- Starting at the top of the tubing next to your body firmly grasp the tubing with the index finger and thumb of one hand. With the other hand use the index finger and thumb to move the fluid down the tubing (this is called "stripping the tubing").
- Uncap the pouring spout and squeeze the contents of the plastic bottle in the measuring cup.
- Squeeze the bottle flat to create suction and replace the cap while squeezing to maintain the vacuum.
- Measure and record the output and discard the fluid into the toilet. Record the output each time you empty the bottle.

- Keep track of the output (drainage) and when the total is down to 30ml or less over a 24-hour period we'll remove the drain in the office.
- Drain removal takes about 30 seconds and is virtually painless. The suture is cut and the drain slides right out. You should call my office as the output approaches 30 cc's over 24 hours so that we may schedule an office visit for drain removal.

Pain Medication

- A prescription for a narcotic pain medication (usually Vicodin, Norco or Tylenol Nr3) will be provided for you upon discharge. Many patients have very little pain and don't want to use the narcotic. Don't be afraid to use it if you are uncomfortable. If you prefer non narcotic medications you may substitute Tylenol or Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil).

Pathology Report

- The Pathology report is usually available 4-5 days following the surgery. I will call you with the results once the report is available.

Notify my office if:

- Your temperature is over 101.5 F
- You notice increasing swelling, redness, warmth or drainage from around the incision or drain site.

If you experience any problems that you think need to be addressed immediately please call the Jean McLaughlin Women's Center. During regular office hours a nurse or I will talk to you. After hours the answering service will contact me and I will call you back. If you have general questions that do not need immediate attention please e mail me the question and I will either call you back or e mail the answer to your question.

- Jean McLaughlin Women's Center Phone number: 858.675.3108
- My e mail address: elizabeth.revesz@archhealth.org

Sincerely

Elizabeth Revesz, M.D.