



Breast Reconstruction with Tissue Expander

Post-Op Instructions

Please read **ALL** the instructions outlined below.

Post-Op Instructions:

Bra

- You may go without a bra. If you choose to wear a bra it should be a loose-fitting, non-underwire bra for the first 6 weeks after surgery.
- You may be given a bra or binder to attach your drains to

Pain medication (such as Hydrocodone) will be prescribed. We do not want you ever taking more than 8 tabs per 24 hours. We would like you to taper this medication starting 3-5 days after surgery to perhaps one tab every 4-6 hours. This medication will cause constipation and the best treatment for the constipation from this medication is to get off the medication as soon as possible. Many patients do well with prescription strength Motrin for pain after the initial few days. **Please use medications as prescribed.**

Slight temperature elevation during the first 48 hours after surgery is a natural consequence of the body's reaction to surgical trauma. There is Tylenol in your pain medication that should control mild fevers. If the temperature is over 101, most of the time the cause is not walking or doing the incentive spirometry breathing treatments enough. Call us if your temperature stays higher than 101.5 for more than 8 hours and does not respond to walking, deep breathing and coughing.

Activities:

- * No strenuous exercise for 6 weeks
 - No lifting >10 pounds
 - No aerobic activities (treadmill, bike, aerobic classes)
 - Do not increase your heart rate over 100 beats per minute
 - No weight lifting for 6 weeks (arms, chest, shoulders)
 - Remember to take brief walks every hour during the day, this will help to reduce swelling and decreases the chance of blood clots.
 - Work may typically be resumed within 2-4 weeks after surgery with restrictions. Ask your surgeon.
 - Do not drive within 6 hours of taking pain medication. You should also be able to move your arms without pain before driving. This is typically within 1-3 weeks
 - You may resume "normal activities," such as, shopping and light chores as tolerated, usually within the first 3 days
 - You may resume sexual activity when it is comfortable to do so. This is typically 1-2 weeks after surgery. It is important to avoid direct pressure to the breast skin during the healing process for the first 6 weeks.

What to Expect:

- * If you have skin glue or steri strips leave them in place until your follow-up visit. If you have a strip of yellow gauze then remove it the first day after you get home and apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment to your incision each day for 5 days.
- * Sponge bath only while drains are in place. Some surgeons allow showering 24 hours after surgery, so ask your surgeon when you can begin showering. Do not soak your incisions under water for 3 weeks.
- * It is very common to have numbness of your breasts. You will typically regain sensation after many months
- * Your first appointment after surgery will be within 5-10 days.
- * It is normal to experience pulling or pinching sensation for weeks and sometimes months after surgery.
- * Swelling is to be expected for several weeks.
- * If implants are placed it is normal to feel like they are not part of your body. It takes 3-4 weeks for your breasts to soften and feel more natural
- * Drains
 - After surgery you will have drains. Before you leave the hospital you will receive instructions on how to care for them at home.
 - **Breast Reconstruction with tissue expanders:** you will have 4 drains, 2 on each breast. Normally they will come out in 1-2 weeks following surgery.
 - **Breast reconstruction with latissimus dorsi flaps with expanders:** you will have a total of 6 drains. 2 on each side of the back and 1 in each breast. The drains in the back will stay in for approximately 3 weeks.

POSTOPERATIVE DRAIN CARE

1. Drains are simply thin plastic tubes that are placed at the time of surgery in order to allow fluid to leave the surgical site rather than accumulating.
2. The drains will be sutured to the skin and are usually covered by a clear plastic adhesive dressing.
3. There are usually markings on the drain bulb to measure the amount of fluid (mL or cc's).
4. Be sure to wash hands thoroughly before handling the drain.
5. Strip the tubing every 2 hours
6. Open the valve and the bulb will expand completely.
7. Measure the fluid once the bulb has expanded by reading the marking on the bulb.
8. Record the amount.
9. Gently squeeze the fluid from the drain into the cup to empty it completely.
10. Squeeze the bulb tightly in your hand and close the valve with the other hand (this restores the suction).

11. Keep a daily record (24 hour totals) of the fluid. Each morning empty the drain at the same time to get an accurate 24 hour total. Empty the bulb as often as needed but remember to record the amount each time. Good times to empty the drain are when you get up in the morning, midday, and before bedtime.
12. When you have multiple drains, record separate totals for EACH drain.
13. You can expect the drainage to be bright red for the first 2-3 days, then pinkish, and then turn to a clear, amber color.
14. When the drainage is less than 30cc in a 24hour period for 2 days, please call the office and make an appointment to have the drain removed.

FREQUENT QUESTIONS:

1. What do I do if a drain falls out? We do not replace drains once they have fallen out. If the drain is pulled or comes out before it is ready, please call the office during regular hours and schedule an appointment to be seen.
2. What do I do if the dressing falls off? Apply polysporin ointment to the drain site with a clean Q-tip and cover with dry sterile gauze and tape.
3. How do I handle the drains in the shower? It is easiest to safety pin the drains onto a long ribbon or piece of gauze placed around your waist or neck while showering.
4. What if the drain won't hold suction? This can sometimes be due to a small leak in the system. Please call the office during regular business hours and schedule an appointment to be seen. In the meantime, continue emptying the drain as above.
5. The drain site is red and painful. What should I do? This can signal an infection. Please contact the office during business hours and an appointment should be rescheduled within 24 hours.