

Mastectomy Post-Operative Instructions

Wound & Drain Care:

1. You will have one or more incisions, depending on the exact surgery performed.
2. All of your stitches will be buried under the skin, except for the stitches around the drains.
3. If you have an immediate reconstruction, you will get more instructions from your plastic surgeon. Those are the most important instructions you will get. Follow them.
4. You may have some bruising after surgery and this is normal. The bruising may even track down your back and flank.
5. There may be a small amount of drainage from your wounds and/or around the drain exit site; this is usually normal and nothing to worry about. Place a dry (available at any drug store) over the wound to absorb any drainage. In general, leave the surgical dressings intact until you see your doctor.
6. Drain care will be taught to you prior to your discharge. Make sure you understand how to record the drain output and how to empty the bulb prior to leaving. Most drains will be removed in the first 7-10 days after surgery.
7. The safest bet to prevent infection when drains are in place is to avoid getting the entire surgical site wet. This means that sponge baths are going to be your go-to option in the post-op period.

For Pain:

1. Wear the surgical bra provided day and night for the first week, then as instructed after your first post-op visit. The less you move your chest and shoulders, the better it will feel.
2. You may take Tylenol or Advil every 4-6 hours as directed on the bottle.
3. You will be given a prescription for a mild narcotic for more severe pain. You can use it if needed.

Work/Activity:

1. Most patients are not able to get back to work until after the first week, sometimes longer.
2. If you need a work excuse for the period of your recuperation, please let us know.
3. Avoid vigorous and bouncy activities for the first month after surgery; walking, low impact exercises, and VERY light housework are OK in small amounts if it is not causing discomfort. However, since everyone's ideas of light housework vary, here's a rule-of-thumb: if you have to raise your hands above shoulder level or lift anything greater than 10 lbs, you're working too hard.

When to call the doctor:

1. If you have severe, uncontrolled pain. If you have had reconstruction, often times your plastic surgeon will give you some additional medications to help with pain control.
2. If you run a fever of 100.5°F or higher within a few days of the operation.
3. If you have a large amount of drainage that is soaking the bandage more than once a day.
4. If the area around your wound becomes red/inflamed.