



My BREAST CANCER *Doc*

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Mastectomy and Reconstruction (implant or flap) Post-Operative Instructions

You should purchase these supplies prior to your surgery:

- * Few tubes of bacitracin ointment
- * Sports bra that is not too tight
- * Gauze pads or maxi pads or nursing pads
- * 1 bottle of antibacterial soap
- * Roll of paper tape (such as Micropore®)

Diet:

Start with clear liquids and toast or crackers. If those are well tolerated, progress to a regular diet. Avoid spicy or greasy foods for 24-48 hours.

For flap-based procedures, progress with a light diet. Smaller, more frequent meals will help prevent bloating. Limit caffeine and chocolate for the first week. Foods high in fiber and protein are recommended.

Wound Care, Dressing:

Keep your dressings clean, dry, and intact until your first follow-up appointment, 6 days after surgery, which should already be scheduled. Dr. Schwartz will remove your dressings at this appointment. All of your sutures will be under the skin. You will have a layer of steristrips, similar to tape, on all of your incisions. Please do not remove the steristrips.

You will have 1 or 2 drains in each breast. You will have 1 or 2 drains in the back donor site if you had flap (muscle-sparing latissimus dorsi) surgery. Instructions and teaching by the nursing staff will be provided at the surgery center. There is a separate section on drain care available on our website. Empty and record in milliliters (ml) the drainage amount three times per day and bring your drain record with you to each clinic appointment.

You may feel the implant or the drain under the skin, especially if you are very thin. This is normal.

Pain and Swelling:

Pain medication will be prescribed to you to use as needed postoperatively. Pain is best controlled with lower doses of multiple medications such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen and narcotics (oxycodone prescribed).

You can expect moderate swelling in the reconstructed breast, underarm and back if you had flap surgery. You will have numbness in the reconstructed breast and back for up to 12 months. You may also experience tightness in the back for several months after flap surgery.

Garments:

Bring a loose-fitting sports bra with you to your first post-operative appointment which will be put on by the nursing staff after your dressings are removed and your wounds are examined.

Medications:

Take pain medication as needed for up to 4 weeks in moderation and at night if needed. While you are taking pain medicine, you are encouraged to follow a high fiber diet or take a stool softener such as Colace (available over the counter), as pain medications tend to cause constipation.

Do not take Motrin/Ibuprofen or Aspirin products for 1 week after surgery. Ask Dr. Schwartz when you may resume your blood thinning medications. All other prescription medications may be resumed immediately, as discussed with your physician. Take your full course of antibiotics when prescribed by Dr. Schwartz.

Activity:

You may walk and climb stairs immediately following surgery. After 2 weeks you may resume moderate activity such as brisk walking. No sexual activity for 3 weeks. During the first 3-4 weeks, do not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk (approximately 10 pounds). After 6 weeks you may resume more strenuous aerobic work and lifting activities.

Bathing:

You may shower 24 hours after your drains are removed. You may get your incisions wet, but do not direct the water spray at your incision site. Pat dressings dry. Do not submerge the incision in a bath, swimming pool or hot tub for the first 4-6 weeks. If you have a flap reconstruction, Dr. Schwartz may allow you to shower with your drains still in place, but clear this with him first.

Sleeping:

During the first 2 weeks, place pillows under your head and knees. Sleeping in a recliner may be most comfortable to keep the upper body supported. After the first 2 weeks, sleeping on your side and back is permitted, but not on your stomach. After 4 weeks, resume normal and comfortable sleeping positions.

Driving:

Most patients are able to start driving again approximately 3 weeks after their procedure or sooner if they are no longer taking narcotics.

Smoking, Alcohol, and Cannabis:

Do not smoke or use vape pens after surgery as it impedes wound healing and can lead to serious wound complications. Alcohol consumption and smoking of any kind is dangerous while taking pain medicine. It has a tendency to worsen bleeding. If you use cannabis/marijuana, including vape pens, please discuss with your physician.

Post-Operative Appointment:

Your first follow-up visit will be approximately 1 week after surgery. Dr. Schwartz (or his physician assistant) will then see you at appropriate intervals after this to monitor your progress.

Work:

For Implant-Based Procedures

Depending on your career and your rate of healing, you should be able to return to work within 1-2 weeks of surgery. Your surgeon will be able to give you a better estimate depending on your physical and professional profile.

For Flap Procedures

Depending on your career and your rate of healing, you should be able to return to work within 4 weeks of surgery. Dr. Schwartz will be able to give you a better estimate depending on your physical and professional profile. Flying or traveling is permitted after the first week as tolerated.

Please call the office 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and request to speak to Dr. Schwartz if the above instructions do not answer your questions or if you experience:

- Excessive pain
- Rapidly expanding swelling under the skin
- Bleeding
- Redness at the incision site or pus drainage from incision
- Spreading, bright pink discoloration
- Fever over 101.5° F