

CareGivers4Cancer

Battling cancer together

Mastectomy Pre-and Post-Operative Suggestions

Be Prepared Going into Surgery

- ☞ You will be instructed to avoid aspirin or blood thinners for approximately 7 days prior to surgery. Also, have nothing to eat or drink 7-8 hours prior to surgery.
- ☞ Have a soft bra with padding or a soft camisole to wear when you are discharged from the hospital.
- ☞ Bring a soft pad or pillow to cushion your upper body from the car's seat belt.
- ☞ Arrange a place to put the drainage cup when going home besides pinning it to your clothes.
- ☞ Wear front-opening, oversize blouse or shirt until you're fitted for prostheses or have reconstructive surgery. If you have lymph node removal, it will be difficult to reach your arms up for a pullover shirt. If lymph nodes are NOT involved, then anything over the head will work.

Post-Operative Suggestions

- ☞ Be sure to check with your insurance company about the usual length of hospital stay coverage for a mastectomy and/or reconstructive surgery. For an uncomplicated procedure, it is usually up to three days.
- ☞ A drainage tube (JP drain) may be attached in your surgical area for 1-4 weeks. You will need to keep track of the amount of drainage daily so the doctor can determine when to remove the tube. Sometimes the drainage tube may fall out on its own, if this happens don't panic but call your surgeon. Drainage will decrease over time.
- ☞ Use a skirt hanger when you get into the shower, so you can clip the draining cup to the hanger and have free range of motion. Or, place a terrycloth robe sash around your neck while in the shower; pin the tubes at the ends of the sash.
- ☞ Ask your doctor about arm exercises after the drainage tube and stitches are removed. Muscle soreness and tightness on the side of surgery might exist. Keep the arm elevated to prevent swelling.
- ☞ Call your surgeon if any of the symptoms appears:
 - ☞ Large amounts of swelling
 - ☞ Redness around the incision area
 - ☞ Fever
 - ☞ Excessive warmth around the incision



CareGivers4Cancer

Battling cancer together

Activities After Surgery

Typically, lumpectomies require the least amount of recovery time and a mastectomy with a tissue flap reconstruction takes longer. Always check with your doctor and ask about recovery times.

- ☞ Listen to your body and do what you can. Rest between activities.
- ☞ Avoid heavy lifting until you are completely healed. Avoid grocery shopping, vacuuming, or working long hours at the computer.
- ☞ Light activities, such as preparing meals, folding laundry, paperwork and short times at the computer are acceptable.
- ☞ Do not drive while on pain medications. If the lymph nodes were not involved, you may be able to drive within several days. If you have had a lymph node removal and/or reconstruction, it may be several days to weeks before you drive. Ask your doctor.
- ☞ Some women can return to work within weeks of surgery but it depends on what type of surgery they've had and each individual's stamina and stress tolerance.

Where to Purchase Specialty Items

- ☞ Department stores lingerie departments
- ☞ Boutique shops specializing in mastectomy products
- ☞ Full-service drugstores

