

After Your Breast Surgery – Inpatient

Wound management

After your surgery, you will go home with a dressing over your breast wound and potentially one under your arm for where the lymph nodes were sampled. These dressings are waterproof and should stay on until your post op appointment where they will be removed by one of the doctors or the specialist breast nurse.

If you have a negative pressure dressing on (PICO) the nursing staff will show you how to care for this dressing. Although the dressing is waterproof, it is important to keep the pump attached to the PICO dressing away from the water.

Skin Care

You may shower the next day after your surgery but avoid swimming or soaking in a bath as this may lead to the dressing lifting off. Gently pat the wound dressing dry and avoid using moisturiser around the dressing area but it is fine to use on the rest of the body.

Supportive Bra

It is important to wear a firm and supportive bra that has NO underwire

after your surgery. This helps to support the wound and minimise swelling. It is a good idea to wear it day and night for 2 weeks minimum wear for 6 weeks if you have had a reconstruction.

Removal of Sutures

The sutures used are dissolvable and therefore do not require removal. Sometimes a knot from the suture may not dissolve and will begin to poke through the skin. If this is bothering you, you can contact the breast nurse to trim it back.

Appearance of the Wound

You may notice bruising around the wound. This is quite normal and will gradually disappear over the next week or so.

Very rarely an infection may develop in the wound. If you notice increasing pain, swelling or redness around the incision or you feel unwell and feverish, please contact the breast nurse, your GP or the Lifehouse after hours number.

Compression Socks T.E.D.S.

Should be worn until your follow up appointment where your surgeon will advise if they are necessary to wear further.

Drains

If you have been sent home with a drain/drains it will likely stay in until your follow up appointment unless you have been instructed otherwise. Some types of surgery require the drain for longer period, which your doctor or breast nurse will inform you about.

*Drain education will be given by the specialist breast nurse or a member of the ward nursing staff

*Ensure you measure the drain at the same time each day and keep a daily record of the output

*Bring the recorded measurement readings to your follow up appointment

*Drain Dressing is waterproof but if it leaks or need replacing, see your GP or contact the breast care nurse - numbers listed below.

Medications

If you are sent home with antibiotics, please ensure you take the full course. Take regular Panadol for pain relief and if needed, you will be sent home from hospital with a script for something stronger, ensure that you are also taking something to keep your bowels moving if you are on strong pain relief.

Driving

Driving is permitted 24 hours post-surgery provided you do NOT have drains in and are NOT taking sedative medication such as strong painkillers. Ensure you feel safe to drive and can wear your seat belt.

Exercise

Walking is great but please limit other forms of exercise until your post-op appointment and clarify restrictions with your surgeon or nurse then. Do not lift anything over 2 Kgs until your follow up.

Arm Sensation and Movement

You may experience:

*Discomfort

*Sharp jabbing sensations

*Numbness or reduced sensation

*Sensitivity to touch or pressure

*Burning or tingling sensations

These can last up to 3-6 months after surgery. You may also have difficulty moving your arm and shoulder. It is important to practise the exercises given to you by the physiotherapist in the hospital. If you do experience pain and your range of arm movement does not improve, please inform your surgeon or contact the breast care nurse or physiotherapist.

Post-Operative Check-Up

Before leaving hospital, you will be given an appointment to see the surgeon in approximately 7-10 days after your discharge. Please allow some waiting time if your appointment is at the breast clinic. At this time your doctor will check the wound and discuss the results of your surgery and let you know the next stage of your treatment plan and when your next follow up will be.

Scar Massage

*Start scar massages around the 4 weeks mark after your surgery.

*Do Not massage if any wound issues after your surgery.

*Choose whatever kind of cream or oil you like and massage using a circular motion with your fingers for **about 10 minutes** or until the scar starts to feel sensitive. Do not continue massaging if the scar becomes sore or inflamed. Repeat 2 or 3 times a day.

*You can use silicone gel or strips at this point as well.

Contact us prior to your follow up appointment if you have any of the following:

*Excessive swelling in the region

*Excessive pain not relieved by medication

*Bleeding, discharge or bad odour from the wound area

*Fever or chills

Contacts:

Breast Care Nurses

Helena Lee

0428 365 829

helena.lee@lh.org.au

Roan Misoles

8514 0867

roan.misoles@lh.org.au

After hours

8514 1999

Your local GP

Private patients may also call the surgeon's rooms directly