Mastectomy — Instructions Before Surgery

The following information will help you to prepare for your upcoming surgery. We hope this information may help to make this experience more comfortable for you. If you have any questions regarding the instructions, please contact the Breast Surgery Clinic.

You will generally stay overnight in the hospital after your mastectomy. You may stay longer if it is medically necessary. You will need to have a responsible adult with you to drive you home. It is unsafe and against hospital policy to permit you to drive home after surgery when you have received any medication that might slow your responses (anesthesia, pain medication, or any medication to relieve anxiety).

NOTHING TO EAT OR DRINK AFTER MIDNIGHT on the night before your surgery. Any medications that you take routinely should be taken at the usual time with a sip or two of water. People with diabetes, heart disease, and other illnesses will meet with our anesthesia team several days before surgery to know which medications you should take on the day of surgery.

DO NOT TAKE ASPIRIN or aspirin containing products for 7 days before your surgery. Tylenol® is okay. STOP vitamin E supplements or Fish Oil 1 week before. Vitamin E in a multivitamin is okay.

Wear comfortable clothing: a two-piece, loose outfit with a zipper or buttons in the front is the easiest to put on. Please bring it with you.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS TO BRING WITH YOU TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL:

- **DO NOT BRING VALUABLES.** Give them to family/friends.
- Personal items (toothbrush, toiletries, pillow, earplugs).
- Slippers, extra socks.
- iPod or CD player and headphones, favorite music.
- Bathrobe open in front, button or zipper sweater, or bed jacket.
- Light reading.
- Important telephone numbers.
- If you have not chosen immediate reconstruction we will give you information about a bra with insert. If you have chosen reconstruction, consult the specific information given to you by your nurse.

Mastectomy — Instructions After Surgery

PAIN MANAGEMENT

People experience different types and amounts of pain or discomfort after surgery. The goal of pain management is to assess your own level of discomfort and to take medication as it is needed. You will have better results controlling your pain if you take pain medication before your pain is severe.

When pain is experienced, it is recommended to take pain medication on a regular schedule. Ibuprofen (e.g. Motrin®, Advil®) or Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) are non-narcotics that can decrease pain. You will also be given a prescription for Norco® or another narcotic for the management of moderate pain.

Please notify us of any drug allergies, reactions, or medical problems that would prevent you from taking these drugs. Norco® is a narcotic and should not be taken with alcoholic drinks. Do not use narcotics while driving.
Narcotics can also cause or worsen constipation so try to increase your fluids, eat high fiber foods (like prunes and bran), and make sure you are up, out of bed, taking small walks.

An ice pack may be helpful to decrease discomfort and swelling, particularly to the armpit after lymph node dissection. A small pillow positioned in the armpit may also decrease discomfort.

Although you will not have felt it at the time, nor remember it afterwards, you will have had a tube down your throat during surgery. This can often cause a sore throat for a few days following your surgery.

INCISION (SCAR) AND DRESSING CARE
Your incision (scar) has both stitches and steri-strips (small white strips or tape) and is covered by a gauze dressing and either a plastic dressing or tape.

Gauze and plastic dressing: The dressing can be removed 2-3 days after surgery. This dressing is waterproof so you can shower with it on. BE CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH OR REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS OR SUTURES.

Gauze and paper tape dressing: You may remove the dressing 2 days after surgery. This dressing is not waterproof, so you will need to remove it before showering. BE CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH OR REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS OR SUTURES.

You may shower starting 24 hours after surgery, except if you have a gauze and paper tape dressing- then you will need to wait 2 days. Pat dry your plastic dressing or steri-strips.

You will have a Jackson-Pratt (JP) drain after your surgery. This drain is a plastic tube from under the skin to outside your body with a bulb attached to it. Empty the drain 2-3 times per day or when the bulb is full. Write down the amount drained on the record sheet provided to you. Your nurse will teach you how to empty your drain. An information sheet on JP drains is included in your folder.

Brusing and some swelling are common in women after surgery.

A low-grade fever (under 100° F) is normal the day after surgery.

ACTIVITY
Avoid strenuous activity, heavy lifting, and vigorous exercise until the stitches are removed. Tell us what you do and we will help you make a personal plan for “what you can do when” after surgery.

Walking is a normal activity that can be restarted right away.

No housework or lifting more than 10lbs until the drain is out. You may restart driving when you are no longer on narcotics and you feel safe turning the wheel and stopping safely.

Most people return to work within 2-4 weeks. Return to work varies with your type of work, your overall health, and personal preferences. Discuss returning to work with us.

DIET
You may resume your regular diet as soon as you can take fluids after recovering from anesthesia.

We encourage 8-10 glasses of water and non-caffeinated beverages per day, plenty of fruits and vegetables, and lower fat foods. Talk with us about recommendations for healthy eating.

FOLLOW-UP CARE
The pathology results from your surgery should be available within one week after your surgery.

We will contact you by telephone with the results or will inform you at your post-operative visit. Please let us know the telephone number where you may be reached with the results.

Follow-up appointments are generally made before surgery with your physician and a nurse. Call the Breast Surgery Clinic if you do not have or remember an appointment.

Call the surgery number at the Breast Surgery Clinic for the following problems, any unanswered questions, or emotional support needs. Ask to speak with a nurse during the day. After business hours, your call will be forwarded to the answering service to reach your doctor or the doctor on call.

• Pain that is not relieved by medication
• Fever more than 100° F or chills
• Excessive bleeding (a bloody dressing)
• Excessive swelling
• Redness outside the dressing
• Discharge or bad odor from the wound
• Allergic or other reaction to medication(s)
• Constipation (no bowel movements)
• Anxiety, depression, trouble sleeping, need more support