

Bilateral Mastectomy with Free Nipple Grafts Post-Operative Instructions

General Instructions

- Someone must drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1-2 days.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Follow balanced diet with high protein and fluid intake.
- Decreased activity may promote constipation, so you may want to add more raw fruit to your diet and be sure to increase fluid intake.
- Take pain medication as prescribed. Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin unless approved by your surgeon.
- Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medications.
- **Do not smoke, as smoking delays healing, increases the risk of complications, and can kill the nipple grafts.**

Follow-Up Care

- **Leave binder and dressings in place until follow up appointment.**
- Follow up in office within 1 week, 3 weeks, and 3 months of surgery unless otherwise directed by your surgeon.
- Record drain output and bring drain logs to your first follow up appointment. If drainage is minimal, drains will be removed at the first post-op appointment.

Activities

- Start walking as soon as possible, this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any pain medications (narcotics).
- Do not drive until you have full range of motion with your arms.
- Refrain from vigorous activity for 2-6 weeks. Increase activity gradually as tolerated.
- Avoid chest exercises and lifting anything over 5 pounds for 4 weeks.
- Resume social and employment activities in about 2 weeks (if not too strenuous).
- Wear your surgical vest as directed for 3 to 4 weeks post op.
- If your chest skin is exceedingly dry after surgery, you can apply a moisturizer several times a day, but be sure to keep the suture and nipple area clean and dry.

What to Expect

- Incisions will be taped with steri-strips. Leave these in place until they fall off themselves or need to be changed. You can expect drainage onto the steri-strips.
- Expect moderate drainage on your initial dressing, it is not uncommon for this to seep onto the surgical vest.
- Maximum discomfort will occur the first few days after surgery.
- You may experience temporary soreness, bruising, swelling and tightness in the chest as well as discomfort around your incisions.

- You may have random, shooting pains and itching throughout your chest and along incisions for a few months. This is part of the normal healing process.

Incision Care

- Nipple Graft Care
 - **Avoid getting nipples and incisions wet for 2 weeks. Do not shower or bathe for 2 weeks after surgery. Sponge baths until otherwise directed by your surgeon.**
 - **Post-op Days 1-5:** Antibiotic nipple bolsters are sutured on during surgery to aid with skin graft healing. Leave dressings and vest in place until week 1 post-op appointment.
 - **Post-op Days 6-14:** Once nipple bolsters are removed, grafts are redressed with xeroform (antibiotic soaked gauze) and large bandage. Change xeroform dressings daily for 1 week.
 - **Post-op Days 14-21:** Use bacitracin over nipples covered with a bandage.
 - **After 3 weeks:** Keep nipple grafts moisturized with Vaseline or cocoa butter. They no longer need to be covered with a bandage.
- Keep steri-strips on until second follow up appointment. Keep incisions clean and dry.
 - After steri-strips are removed, for optimal scar healing use silicone strips over mastectomy incisions (you can order these from amazon or pick up at a local drug store). You can alternatively use vitamin-e lotion, tea tree oil, or cocoa butter.
- Avoid exposing scars to sun for at least 3 months. Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 30 or greater). We recommend sunscreen containing zinc oxide.
- No tub soaking/swimming for 1 month.

Appearance

- Most of the discoloration and swelling will subside in 2-4 weeks.
- Scars may be red and angry looking for 6 months. In time, these usually soften and fade.
- **Nipple grafts will appear black and unsightly for 2 to 3 weeks after surgery. This is normal. This top black layer will slowly peel off on its own and reveal healthy pink tissue underneath. Do not pick at or peel off the top layer on your own as this can affect nipple graft healing.**

When to Call

- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.
- If you have an oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- If you have increased swelling or bruising.
- If swelling and redness persist after a few days.
- If you have increased redness along the incision.
- If you have any yellowish or greenish drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.
- If you have bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.
- If you have loss of feeling or motion.

For Medical Questions, please contact: Katie Leemaster PA-C at katie@districtps.com or Dr. Praful Ramineni at doc@districtps.com

Your post op appointment is scheduled for _____