

Mastectomy/Tissue Expander Reconstruction: Post-operative Instructions

- First and foremost relax. Your most important role is simply to take it easy and call the office if there are any concerns or questions.
- Discontinue all aspirin products or medicine that can increase your chance of bleeding two weeks prior to surgery. This includes: diet pills, all herbal medications (tumeric), flax seed oil and vitamin E.
- Dr. Patel will want to see you in the office one week after surgery.
- We will place you in a surgical bra after the procedure with fluffed gauze in the bra.
- The day after surgery you may remove the gauze and bra, and you may shower. You may wash gently with soap and water, but you may not bathe, swim, or soak. You should then put on a clean soft bra, and you no longer need gauze or padding in the bra. Make sure that your drains do not hang.
- Please empty your drain every few hours, or when it is full and place it back to suction. Please “strip” the drainage tube at least three times daily. Always record the amount of fluid when you empty the drain. Please keep a log of the amounts, and bring this with you to your office appointments, as this is how we know when your drain is ready to be removed.
- We want you to wear a soft bra with NO UNDERWIRE, 24 hours a day (including sleeping) for the first 6 weeks after surgery, removing the bra only to shower or to wash the bra. You may continue to wear the surgical bra or your own bra as long as it is the correct type. This will support the breasts while they are healing and help decrease swelling. Make sure the bra is not too tight.
- You will have tape and skin glue protecting your incisions. DO NOT REMOVE. Dr. Patel will remove it for you 3 weeks after surgery. If it begins to lift up or fall off, you may trim the excess, but leave the remainder in place.
- Sleep with your head elevated and pillows behind your back for support as needed.
- You will have swelling and bruising, this is normal. Do not use ice packs on your breasts because the skin will be numb and the ice packs may actually cause an injury.
- You should try to stay active starting the first day after surgery, but limit lifting your arms above the level of your shoulders, and do not engage in heavy exercise or activity until cleared by your surgeon. No lifting anything heavier than 5 pounds.
- If you have tissue expanders placed above the muscle, you must significantly limit any upper body movement/reaching as much as possible for the first few weeks after surgery, or you may develop a fluid collection.
- You may not drive until cleared by your surgeon.

- Do not apply any other creams or lotions to the skin unless instructed to do so.
- You may take Zofran as needed for nausea.
- You may start taking your pain medicine if needed 4 hours after surgery. Do not take on an empty stomach. Eat crackers or dry toast to prevent nausea.
- A responsible adult should remain with you during the first 24 hours after surgery.
- Call your surgeon immediately at (832) 835-1131 if you experience persistent pain not relieved with pain medication, excessive drainage or purulence, redness of the breasts, or fever >101.
- Call 911 immediately if you experience shortness of breath, sudden sharp chest pains (especially if made worse by deep breath or cough), painful respiration, new onset of wheezing without any prior history, or if you experience a seizure without any prior history.
- ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING! Smoking will compromise the blood flow to the surgical area, which will delay the normal healing process.
- If you have a tissue expander, it may be placed above or below the chest muscle. Some tightness and pain is to be expected for the first 2-3 days. After that time soreness may persist but pain should diminish. Pain is best managed by taking motrin or advil if you are able, as well as your prescription pain medication for the first 2 to 3 days if needed.
- Be aware that you may experience some of this same muscle soreness after office visits when more fluid is placed into the expander, as this further stretches out the muscle and/or skin in a similar way.
- If you have had surgery on your lymph nodes, expect your armpit and arm to be sore and potentially swollen. If your arm swells keep it elevated above the level of your heart. Additionally, blue dye will be used during surgery to identify your lymph nodes. This will discolor some of your breast skin. This will gradually go away over a few weeks. You will also have blue/green urine for several days after surgery from the dye.
- After surgery, please start with sips of clear liquids and advance diet as tolerated. Try to stick to bland, non-spicy foods for the first day until you have recovered from anesthesia.
- Please take all of your antibiotics according to the prescription.
- You need to start walking and taking deep breaths the day of surgery when the effects of anesthesia have worn off. This is to help prevent pneumonia and blood clot formation in the legs. Take deep breaths every hour while awake.
- Avoid vigorous exercise, yard work, vacuuming, or any other activity that requires excessive arm usage for six weeks. Do not wear tight pull over clothes the first two weeks.
- Hematoma, or bleeding inside the breast, can occur early after surgery. When this occurs, the area around the expander typically becomes significantly or dramatically bigger, tighter, and more painful.. If this occurs, notify the office immediately.



- Notify the office if you experience any of the following:
 - redness around incisions, foul smelling odor or drainage from incisions or drains.
 - temperature above 101 ° F
 - severe changes in color of your remaining breast skin (red, purple, black, etc.)

Please call our office, 832.835.1131, if you have any questions or problems.

Patient Signature

Date

Witness

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