

Mastectomy for Gender Affirming Care Post-Operative Instructions

IMPORTANT: For out-of-town patients, please plan to stay in Victoria for at least 3 days following a concentric circular operation or 24 hours following a free nipple graft with a return visit in 5-7 days.

INSTRUCTIONS

- **You will be required to purchase a post-operative compression vest in advance of your operation.** Our office will take measurements and order this and bring it to your surgery.
- The vest is worn day and night for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Have someone drive you home/to hotel after the surgery and help you at home/hotel for 1-2 days. It is mandatory that you have a responsible adult pick you up from the hospital post operatively and stay with you the first night. Any friend, family member, spouse, or nurse is suitable but they must be present at the surgery facility for you to be discharged into their care.
- You will be instructed by your nurse how to take your prescribed pain medication and an anti-inflammatory (ie Ibuprofen)

ACTIVITIES

- Start walking as soon as possible, this helps swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking pain medications (narcotics).
- **Avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks.**
- Return to work when you feel well enough – could be 1-2 days after surgery or 2 weeks depending on what type of work. Stay away from any job or sport that risks a blow to the chest for at least 4 weeks.
- Avoid sexual activity for 1-2 weeks and strenuous activity for 2-4 weeks.

INCISION CARE

- Most patients manage drains themselves without the need for homecare. You will be taught how to manage your drains and to record drain output.
- A few days after surgery, the gauze pads over your incisions should be taken off.
- If you have had **free nipple grafts/long incision mastectomy**, keep these dressings dry until removed by Dr. Robinson or her nurse, which is approximately 5-7 days after surgery.
- Keep the glued dressing on until approximately 2 weeks postoperatively, it can then be gently removed.
- If you have had **concentric circular mastectomy**, daily thin film of polysporin and a clean bandage should be applied until there is no more scabbing, Dr. Robinson's nurse will advise you of the post-operative garment schedule. For this technique you should set up an appointment in the office 2-3 days after your surgery for the office to review the status of the blood supply to the nipple/areolae.
- You can use fresh gauze pads as needed to protect the incisions.

- You will have 2 drains; they will be removed by Dr. Robinson or her nurse in the office when output is less than 30 ml/24 hrs. If you are from out of town, your family doctor or a walk-in clinic can remove them for you. The length of time the drains remain varies between patients. It could be a few days to a few weeks (typically 7-10 days). Keep incisions clean and inspect daily for signs of infection (redness, swelling, increasing pain). If this happens, contact Dr. Robinson as it could be a sign of infection.
- It is normal to see or feel the knot in the stitches at the end of the incision. The stitch knot is not a problem it will dissolve on its own or come to the surface of the skin, in which case it can be clipped free. Preferably Dr. Robinson would do this.
- Avoid exposing scars to the sun for at least 12 months as this can darken the scars. Use sun block of SPF 30 or greater.
- Do **not** soak in bath, pool, or ocean/lake for at least 4 weeks or until there is no more scabbing.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Minimal post-operative pain (with prescribed medications)
- Discomfort for a few days.
- Chest skin may be partially or totally numb at first; sensation usually returns within a year of surgery, but may not fully return.
- Temporary bruising, swelling, soreness, or burning sensation.
- The worst swelling will dissipate within a few weeks.
- All swelling and bruising should be gone within 6-8 weeks.
- Temporary loss of breast sensation or numbness, which may last up to a year.
- Within 1 month to 6 weeks, you should be back to all of your normal activities.

APPEARANCE

- Flatter, firmed, more masculine chest contour.
- At least 3 or more months before final results are apparent.
- Building up the pectoral muscles (push-ups, bench press) will improve the contour and overall results. You may resume such activities 6-8 weeks post-surgery.

WHEN TO CALL

- If you have significantly increased swelling or rapid bruising, especially if it is on one side more than the other.
- If you have signs of infection (feeling unwell, redness, increasing pain, fever of 38 degrees Celsius or greater).
- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications; such as a rash, severe headache, or vomiting.
- If you have bleeding from the incision that is difficult to control with pressure.
- If you experience sudden shortness of breath, heart palpitations or rapid pulse, pain or swelling in our legs or foot. **Call 911 immediately, or go to your nearest hospital and page the on-call plastic surgeon from there. (250)-590-4429**

WHERE TO CALL

- Dr. Robinson's office: 250-590-7097 Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm
- **Emergencies** after hours (available 24 hours/7 days per week): you may call the plastic surgeon on call at 250-590-4429.
Lastly, if appropriate, you should go to the nearest emergency department or dial 911.