

Post-Op Instructions Breast Surgery

Michael A. Zadeh, M.D.
www.zadehsurgical.com

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.
- You will be given a prescription for pain medication. It is recommended to take the medication when pain is experienced on a regular schedule. Ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) or Tylenol® can be added to your prescription medication if pain control is not adequate. Everyone is different and if the current plan to decrease your pain is not working, it will be changed. **HEALING AND RECOVERY ARE IMPROVED WITH GOOD PAIN CONTROL.**
- An ice pack may be helpful to decrease discomfort and swelling, particularly to the armpit if you have had an axillary lymph node dissection. A small pillow positioned in the armpit also may decrease discomfort.
- Narcotic pain medication 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.

Wound and Dressing Care

- Your incision may have stitches that are located underneath the skin and cannot be seen, or over the skin which can be seen. On rare occasions your incision may be closed by small skin staples.
- On top of the stitches there may be steri-strips (small white strips of tape), or skin glue. Additionally the incision may be covered by a gauze dressing and tape or a plastic dressing.

- You may remove the gauze or plastic dressing 24 HOURS after your surgery.
- **DO NOT REMOVE THE STERI-STRIPS, SKIN GLUE OR STITCHES.** We will remove them during your postoperative visit in 7 days. If your stitches are located underneath the skin, they will dissolve on their own and do not require removal.
- You may shower 24 hours after your surgery. It is ok to get the steri-strips, skin glue, and staples wet.
- If the steri-strips fall off, do not attempt to replace them. If we do not remove the steri-strips or skin glue during your postoperative appointment, then you may do so on your own 2 weeks after the date of your surgery.
- You may be given a sports bra to wear after surgery. If so, please wear this sports bra until your postoperative appointment. It helps to reduce swelling.
- You may or may not have a drain placed at the end of your surgery. For patients with drains, you will be given instructions on how to care for the drain before you leave the hospital. A copy of drain care instructions can also be found on our website at www.zadehsurgical.com
- For patients with a drain, it is ok to shower with the drain. Just be careful that it does not get pulled on or out. The drain will be removed during your postoperative visit.
- **DO NOT** apply any creams, ointments or powders to the incisions.
- **DO NOT** use deodorant under your armpit if you have an incision in your axilla.
- **DO NOT** soak in a hot tub or pool for 2 weeks or as directed.

Activity

- Avoid strenuous activity, heavy lifting, and vigorous exercise until the stitches are removed. Remember to ask us any questions regarding specific activities during your postoperative visit and we will go over them with you in detail.
- Walking is a normal activity that can be restarted right away.
- No strenuous housework until after your first postoperative visit. This includes vacuuming and sweeping.
- No driving while you are on narcotic medication.

- You should move your affected arm as you feel able. Maintain a full range of motion of your shoulder on the operated side. Plus you may stretch out any tightness in your armpit. For patients who have had an axillary lymph node dissection, range of motion exercises can be found on our website at www.zadehsurgical.com/index.php/forms/
- Most people return to work within 1-2 weeks. Return to work varies with your type of work, your overall health and personal preferences. Discuss returning to work with us during your postoperative visit.

The following symptoms occur commonly following breast surgery and should not be cause for alarm:

- Bruising and some swelling around the incisions.
- Small amount of clear drainage from the wound for the first few days.
- A low-grade fever (under 101 °F) is normal the day after surgery.
- Numbness or tingling in the arm or incision.
- Small staining of blood on the dressing.
- Bloody or pink colored discharge in the drain (for patients with a drain)
- Although you will not have felt it at the time, or remember it afterwards, you will have had a tube down your throat during the surgery. This can often cause a sore throat for a few days following your surgery.

Contact the office at (818) 789-1111 for any of the following:

- Pain that is not relieved by medication
- Fever more than 101 °F
- Excessive bleeding (a bloody dressing)
- Excessive swelling
- Redness outside the dressing
- Discharge or bad odor from the wound
- Allergic or other reactions to medication(s)
- Anxiety, depression, trouble sleeping, need more support