



# Lumpectomy Post Operation Patient Packet

**YOUR GUIDE TO RECOVERY  
FOLLOWING BREAST CANCER SURGERY**

Post-Operative Instructions from Your Surgeon

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## Table of Contents

### **I. Types of surgery**

Lumpectomy and incisional biopsy without drain.....	Page 2
Lumpectomy with drain.....	Page 2
Lymph node removal.....	Page 3

### **II. Instructions to follow after discharge from the hospital.....**

Page 4

### **III. What to expect after surgery.....**

Page 5

### **IV. What not to expect after surgery.....**

Page 5

### **V. Managing discomfort.....**

Page 6



## TYPES OF SURGERY

### Lumpectomy and excisional biopsy without drain:

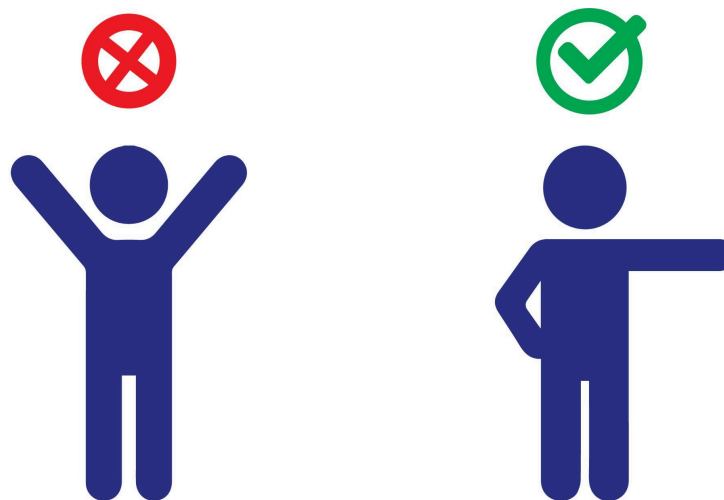
- You will be discharged from the hospital with a dressing over your incision.
- The incision is closed with dissolvable sutures inside and steri-strips (paper-tape) on the outside skin.
- 1-2 days after surgery, you may remove the gauze bandage covering your incision. You will see steri-strips along your incision. Please do not remove the steri-strips. They will fall off on their own or will be removed at your post-operative appointment.
- You may shower 24-48 hours after your surgery. Do not scrub the area. Allow the water to run over the incision. Pat the area dry. Do not rub the incision.
- You may wear a bra after surgery, however some patients prefer wearing a sports bra until their incision has healed. Refer to the section on **Bra Fitting recommendations** in the **REHABILITATION** manual for guidance to ensure proper compression, fit and comfort.

### Lumpectomy with drain:

- Do not remove bulk dressing that is applied after surgery.
- Keep the drain attached to clothing with a safety pin.
- **Drain care:** To empty the drain, undo the top and pour out the fluid into a drain container. To restart the suction function of the drain, squeeze the plastic bottle and while squeezing put the top back on. The drain functions only when the bottle is squeezed and "compressed."
- The drain will be removed about two days after surgery.
- Do not shower until your drain is removed at your post-operative appointment.
- You may wear a bra after surgery, however some patients prefer wearing a sports bra until their incision has healed. Refer to the section on **Bra Fitting Recommendations** in the **REHABILITATION** manual for guidance to ensure proper compression, fit and comfort.

## Lymph node removal:

- The incision is closed with dissolvable sutures inside and steri-strips on the outer skin, which will fall off on their own or can be removed one week after surgery.
- Your urine may be blue for the first 24 hours after surgery if a dye was used to identify certain lymph nodes in the armpit. Your nipple may also be blue stained for a month or so.
- Do not use deodorant or shave until you have been given the “okay” from your surgeon (usually six weeks after surgery). You may use cornstarch or powder.
- Do not lift anything heavy or engage in any strenuous activity during the first 6-8 weeks after surgery including aerobic and resistive exercise, or until you have been given the “okay” to do so by your doctor.
- Arm exercises after surgery are necessary to help you regain motion and strength. They can also reduce pain and stiffness in the shoulder, neck and back. Follow the **Guidelines for Activity and Exercise** and specific **Exercises for Week 1 and Week 2** outlined in the **REHABILITATION** manual to ensure proper healing.
- **DO NOT LIFT YOUR ARM ABOVE SHOULDER HEIGHT FOR THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS AFTER SURGERY OR UNTIL YOUR DRAIN HAS BEEN REMOVED!**





## INSTRUCTIONS TO FOLLOW AFTER DISCHARGE FROM THE HOSPITAL

- Your post-operative appointment was scheduled at the time your surgery was scheduled. If you need to change the appointment, call **732-846-3300**.
- Contact the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department to set up your appointment with a Physical Therapist/Certified Lymphedema Therapist at **732-745-8570, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am-5:30 pm**. Your doctor will give you a referral at your post-operative visit if needed.
- You must have someone drive you home from the hospital.
- You may not drive for at least 24 hours after surgery, and if on pain medication, you cannot drive while taking these medications.
- Do not consume alcoholic beverages while on pain medication or antibiotics.
- Limit your physical activity for the next 24 hours.
- You can resume your normal diet by increasing food and drinks gradually as tolerated.
- Refer to your **REHABILITATION** manual for:
  - ***Guidelines for Activity and Exercise***
  - ***Resuming Activities after Breast Surgery***
  - ***Exercises for Week 1 and Week 2***



## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

- ✓ You may feel more tired than normal.
- ✓ You may experience mild to moderate discomfort or pain after surgery. This is normal and may be relieved by following suggestions in the **Managing Symptoms** section of this manual. The exercises and breathing techniques described in the **REHABILITATION** manual are also very helpful in improving your comfort.
- ✓ You may also experience mild nausea and loss of appetite. This usually resolves in a short period of time after surgery. It is important that you try and eat small frequent meals after surgery and drink plenty of fluids.
- ✓ When lymph nodes are removed, you may see swelling under the arm. This is normal. It is a collection of fluid in the body that will reabsorb on its own and the area will become flat. You may also notice while moving or turning that you hear a water or wave-like sound in the breast which is normal. This fluid is called serum and may leak out of the breast incision.
- ✓ After removing the bulk bandage, your incision may look swollen and you may feel sensations in the breast like pulling or burning. This is normal and all part of the healing process after surgery.
- ✓ At the end of your incision line, you may feel a piece of thread sticking out. This is the end of your suture line and will fall off on its own in approximately 30-45 days.

## WHAT NOT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

If you should experience any of the symptoms below, contact the office and speak with the nurse: **732-846-3300**.

- 🚩 Temperature of 101 or above.
- 🚩 Pain that is not relieved by medication.
- 🚩 Severe swelling or redness of the breast.
- 🚩 Foul smelling discharge of the breast.
- 🚩 Bandages that are soaked through with bright red blood.



## MANAGING DISCOMFORT

*It is normal to feel mild to moderate discomfort following surgery. The following suggestions can help ease your symptoms and make you feel more comfortable.*

### What can I do?

#### Pain

- Take the pain medication prescribed by your doctor as directed.
- An icepack placed in the armpit may help decrease discomfort and swelling after lymph node dissection.
- **DO NOT APPLY HEAT PACK OR MOIST HEAT TO AFFECTED SIDE.**
- Follow instructions **Breathing for Relaxation and Pain Relief** in the **REHABILITATION** Manual.

#### Stiffness

- Performing daily stretches and range of motion exercises as described in the **REHABILITATION** manual will reduce stiffness, increase circulation and decrease pain.
- **DO NOT APPLY HEAT PACK OR MOIST HEAT TO AFFECTED SIDE.**

#### Swelling

- **Armpit or chest wall:** Place a small pillow, or folded towel under your armpit or between your arm and chest wall to provide added compression.
- **Hand or arm:** Follow **Exercises to Relieve Swelling in the Arm and the Hand** in the **REHABILITATION** manual.
- Call your doctor if your swelling does not improve or becomes painful, red, or hot.

#### Stress, Anxiety, Muscle Tension

- Muscle tension, stress, anxiety and pain can be reduced by following techniques described in **Breathing for Relaxation and Pain Relief** in the **REHABILITATION** manual