

Corpus Christi Institute of Cosmetic & Plastic Surgery

POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR BREAST RECONSTRUCTION WITH EXPANDER

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1-2 days.
- Get plenty of rest and increase your fluid intake.
- Decreased activity may promote constipation, so you may want to add more raw fruit to your diet.
- Take pain medications as prescribed. Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medications.
- Refrain from drinking alcohol for three weeks following surgery, even when no longer taking pain medications, as alcohol causes fluid retention.
- If you regularly take vitamins with iron, resume these as tolerated.
- Do not smoke or consume nicotine, as smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Start walking as soon as possible with assistance the day of surgery, this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots. Starting the day after surgery, walk 300 feet three times per day with assistance daily.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any pain medications (narcotics).
- Unless stated on this form, discuss your time off work with your surgeon.
- Do not drive until you have full range of motion with your arms.
- No overhead lifting, strenuous sports or sexual activity for 3-6 weeks unless otherwise specified by Dr. Bindingavele.

INCISION CARE

- You may remove gauze and shower 48 hours after surgery.
- Keep steri-strips on, and replace if they come off. Keep incisions clean and inspect daily for sign of infection. No tub soaking while sutures or drains are in place.
- Place daily soft dressing over incisions and around drain sites to wick away moisture.

EXPECTATIONS

- You are likely to feel tired and sore for 1-2 weeks.
- You CAN NOT have an MRI imaging scan while having an expander in place. Please consult your surgeon prior to any radiology testing.
- Normal sensation to the breast cannot be restored; in time, some feeling may return.

APPEARANCE

- Reconstructed breast may feel firmer and look rounder or flatter than natural breast.

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- Reconstructed breast may not match natural breast.
- Scars will be reddened looking for six months. In time, these usually soften and fade.

DRAIN CARE

- One drain per side usually removed in 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- Second drain per side usually removed in 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- Empty drain bulb 3 times a day and record outputs in mL (milliliters) noting time of day and drain amount. Make sure to record each drain's output separately.
- It is normal for drain outputs to vary and for clots to be in tube and bulb.
- Do not disconnect bulb from tube.
- Do not push in or pull on the drain tube at its entrance on the skin.
- See additional attachment for more instructions and additional drain log.

FOLLOW UP CARE

- Your post-operative appointment will be scheduled before surgery for your convenience.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER TISSUE EXPANSION

- You may experience minor discomfort for the following 12 to 24 hours after each tissue expansion. This discomfort usually subsides 2 to 3 days after each tissue expansion.
- The tissue expander may shift after the first or second expansion.
- You may experience more discomfort on one side than the other if you have bilateral tissue expanders placed.
- Your posture may change causing you to have some upper and/or mid back pain as you're expanded.
- Your shoulder range of motion may become stiff requiring continuing to perform the shoulder exercises during the tissue expansion process to prevent shoulder stiffness and a frozen shoulder.
- You may find it difficult to sleep because you feel tight across the chest and shoulders.
- You may find it difficult to fit into certain types of tight fitting clothing. You may need to wear over sized shirts until the final exchange of the tissue expander (s).
- You may feel chest persist tightness or heaviness secondary to being expanded. This usually subsides with time.
- The tissue expanders will remain in place for a minimum of 8 weeks after completing the last tissue expansion. This will allow for the soft tissues (i.e. skin and muscle) to heal and recover from being stretched before the second surgery takes place for the exchange of the tissue expander for a permanent breast implant.

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- You'll see your surgeon when we think you have achieved your desired breast size to determine if you need additional expansions and for surgical planning.

TREATMENT FOR DISCOMFORT

Ibuprofen (or other NSAIDs) 600 mg by mouth every 6 to 8 hours with food starting the morning of each tissue expansion and continue to take around the clock for 3 to 5 days as needed for discomfort. You may start this two weeks after surgery.

APPEARANCE DURING EXPANSION

- While the tissue is being expanded, a bulge will be created. Depending upon the location of the tissue expander, the bulge may be considered desirable or unsightly.
- Following the exchange of the tissue expander, a more normal and desirable look should be restored.
- After the exchange for permanent implant, the breasts will feel softer with less fullness in your axilla.

WHEN TO CALL

- 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 severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects such as rash, nausea, headache, or vomiting.
- If you have an oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- If you have 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.