

# Gender-Affirming Chest Surgery

## Pre & Post Operative Instructions

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### Note:

This surgery is performed to create a masculine or flat chest contour as part of gender-affirming care. The procedure may involve tissue removal, contouring, and nipple grafts depending on your surgical plan.

### Understanding Your Surgery with General Anesthesia:

- **General Anesthesia:** This type of anesthesia renders you completely unconscious during the procedure, ensuring you feel no pain and have no memory of the surgery. It is typically used for more extensive operations and requires careful monitoring by an anesthesiologist.
  - **Instructions:** Nothing to eat or drink 8 hours before surgery. This includes water, mints, candy, or gum.
  - **Post-Surgery Transportation:** It is mandatory to arrange for a ride home from surgery with a family member or friend. Patients may not use taxis or Ubers.
    - **Why?:** After surgery, especially with general anesthesia, it's important for your safety to have someone responsible to take you home and provide care for at least 1-2 days. This ensures that you have the necessary support during the initial critical recovery period. If you do not arrange for transportation and care for at least 1-2 days, then your surgery may be canceled, at your expense.

### Shopping List

- Tylenol (Acetaminophen): Alternative to narcotic pain medication if pain is not severe. Do NOT take NSAIDS (such as Ibuprofen & others).

## Pre-Operative Instructions

### Medication Management Before Surgery: Guidelines for Minimizing Bleeding Risks

These are general recommendations. For more information please refer to the email: [Preoperative Instructions for Your Upcoming Surgery](#) &/or contact our office for a safe plan tailored to your health needs and surgical procedure

- **Aspirin and NSAIDs:** Please discontinue use at least 3 weeks before your surgery, unless otherwise directed by your surgeon.
- **Anticoagulants (Warfarin, Heparin, Direct Oral Anticoagulants):** The discontinuation schedule varies. Please consult your surgeon at least 3 weeks before surgery to discuss a tailored plan, which may include temporary adjustments to your regimen or bridging therapy.
- **Herbal Supplements and Vitamins:** Discontinue any herbal supplements and vitamins that can increase bleeding risk, such as vitamin E, fish oil, ginkgo biloba, and garlic, at least 2 weeks prior to surgery.
- **ADD / ADHD medications** are to be avoided the day before surgery.
- **Contrave (Naltrexone-containing meds):** Patient must consult with the prescribing physician about when & how to stop this medication prior to surgery.
- **Weight Loss Meds (Ozempic, Wegovy, Semaglutide, ect.), & Biotin.:** are to be stopped 2 weeks prior to surgery.
- **Illicit Drug Use:** Please be honest about any illicit drug use during the preoperative assessment. Your safety is our priority and accurate medical information is crucial for planning a safe and effective surgical procedure.
  - Illicit drug use can have significant interactions with anesthesia and other medications administered during surgery, potentially leading to complications.
  - **Examples of the most important substances to mention include:**
    - Cocaine & Meth.

**Consultation Is Key:** If you are taking any of the above medications or supplements for chronic conditions, do not stop them without first consulting with the physician who prescribed them and your surgeon.

Together, we will develop a safe plan tailored to your health needs and surgical procedure.

## 4 Weeks Before Surgery

- **Reducing/Stopping Nicotine:** We strongly recommend reducing or ideally stopping nicotine (including cigarettes, oral tobacco, e-cigarettes with nicotine, patches, lozenges, and/or gums) for 4 weeks before and after your surgery.
  - **Why?:** Nicotine can significantly hinder your healing process and increase the risk of complications. Nicotine constricts blood vessels, which can impair blood flow to the surgical area, affecting healing and recovery. Any reduction in nicotine exposure is beneficial and contributes positively to your surgical outcome.

## 2 Weeks Before Surgery

- **Alcohol Consumption:** We encourage patients to reduce or stop alcohol consumption for at least 2 weeks before and after surgery.
  - **Why?:** Alcohol can increase the risk of bruising, swelling, and can prolong the healing process. Reducing alcohol intake, even if complete cessation is challenging, but can significantly improve your recovery experience.

## The Day of Surgery: Your Preparation Guide

On the day of your surgery at Asia Pacific Surgery, we prioritize your comfort, safety, and the success of your procedure. To help everything go smoothly, please follow these guidelines carefully:

- **Shower or Bath:** On the day of surgery, please take a shower or bath using soap (either antimicrobial or non-antimicrobial).
  - **Avoid Applying Products:** Do not apply any lotions, perfumes, or other products to your skin after bathing.
- **Medications:**
  - **Blood Pressure Medications:**
    - Take your blood pressure medication as usual, including the day of surgery. On the day of surgery, take it with only a small sip of water.
  - **Diabetes Medications:**
    - DO NOT take any oral and/or injectable diabetic meds the night before or the morning of surgery.
  - Only take medications approved or prescribed by your surgeon with a small sip of water.

- **Fasting:** Adhere to the fasting instructions provided by your surgical team. Typically, this means no eating or drinking, including water, for 8 hours before your surgery.
- **Jewelry and Valuables:** Remove all jewelry and refrain from bringing valuables to the clinic, including piercings from the neck up. We cannot take responsibility for lost items.
- **Makeup and Skincare Products:** DO NOT wear any makeup or apply skincare products on the day of your surgery.
- **Shaving:** If shaving is necessary in the area to be operated on, please do so 3 days prior to your surgery date. Shaving closer to your surgery date, including the day before or the day of, is not advised as it can increase the risk of surgical site infections.
- **Clothing:** Opt for loose, comfortable clothing that doesn't need to be pulled over your head. A button-up or zip-front top is ideal for after the surgery.
- **Communicating Questions or Concerns:** If you have any last-minute questions or concerns, please get in touch with us immediately. See the last page of this document for contact information.

*Our team is committed to making sure you feel fully prepared and confident in the care you'll receive.*

## Post-Operative Instructions

### Medications

1. Tylenol (Acetaminophen):
  - Pain Relief: Tylenol is safe to take for managing pain. Please avoid NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen and Aleve, as they can increase the risk of bleeding.
2. Narcotic Pain Medication:
  - Prescription Medication: If you received a prescription for narcotic pain relievers, take them as directed for pain management. Be aware that these medications can cause constipation.
  - Preventing Constipation: You will be prescribed a laxative and a stool softener to prevent constipation. It's important to start taking these with your first dose of narcotic pain medication. Additionally, increasing dietary fiber, fluid intake, and physical activity can help manage constipation.
3. Zofran (Ondansetron):
  - Nausea Prevention: Zofran is prescribed to help prevent nausea and vomiting, which can be common after surgery. Take this medication as directed, particularly before meals or as soon as you feel nauseated.
4. Antibiotics:
  - Infection Prevention: If you've been prescribed antibiotics, it's crucial to complete the full course as directed, even if you start feeling better. This helps prevent infection and ensures the effectiveness of the treatment.
5. Sinnech (Arnica Montana):
  - Reducing Swelling and Bruising: Sinnech is a homeopathic Arnica montana regimen that you'll take to help reduce swelling and bruising. This can potentially speed up your recovery process. Please follow the specific dosage instructions provided.

### Nutrition

- Hydration: Stay hydrated with plenty of water. A general guideline is to aim for at least 8-10 glasses of water per day (about 2 to 2.5 liters). Limit or avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Meal Approach: If you have a reduced appetite, eat small, frequent meals.

## Activity

- **DVT Prevention:** It's important to start walking as soon as possible after surgery to help prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), a condition where blood clots can form in the veins, usually in the legs. Gentle movement improves blood circulation and reduces the risk of clots. Begin with short walks around your home and gradually increase your activity as recommended by your surgeon.
- **Sleep:**  
Sleep on your back with your head and shoulders elevated at about 30–40 degrees (2–3 pillows). Avoid sleeping on your side or stomach until approved by your surgeon. This position helps reduce swelling and tension on the incisions.
- **Exercise:**  
Gentle walking is encouraged soon after surgery to support circulation and healing. Light physical activity that does not engage the chest can usually be resumed after 2–3 weeks.
  - Avoid strenuous exercise, upper-body workouts, or movements that stretch the chest for at least 4–6 weeks, or until cleared by your surgeon.
  - Be aware that swelling may temporarily increase with activity.
- **Arm Movements and Lifting:**  
Limit arm movements to essential daily activities like brushing your teeth, eating, and gently washing or combing your hair for the first 1–2 weeks after surgery.
  - Avoid vigorous movements and refrain from lifting anything heavier than 5 lbs for 4 to 6 weeks, or as advised by your surgeon.
  - If an activity causes discomfort or pain, stop immediately.
  - Avoid raising your arms above shoulder level for the first 1–2 weeks.
- **Return to Work:**  
Most patients require 1–2 weeks off work, depending on their job responsibilities. A light schedule or part-time work can help ease the transition. For personalized advice, consult your surgeon.

- **Driving:**
  - Do not drive while taking narcotic pain medication.
  - Most patients can resume driving safely after 1–2 weeks once they are off narcotics, have good arm mobility, and feel safe controlling the car.
  - Avoid long drives or manual-shift driving for about 3 weeks.
- **Sexual Intercourse:**

You can resume sexual activity when you feel ready and your incisions are well healed, typically after one month. Keep in mind:

  - Avoid laying on your stomach or side.

## Your Compression Garment

You will be provided with a supportive compression garment after surgery. The garment should feel comfortably supportive, but not tight or restrictive. Continue to wear the garment as recommended by your surgeon, often for 4–6 weeks.

To make daily wear easier, we recommend purchasing two garments so you can alternate as needed while keeping one clean.

You may purchase your own garment if you prefer, as long as it is:

- Made of a soft, breathable material
- Opens and closes in the front (no garments that go over the head or close in the back)
- Contains no wiring

*Wearing the garment as directed is an important part of your recovery. It helps reduce swelling, supports healing tissue, and promotes comfort during the healing process.*

## How to Care for Your Incisions

Your incisions are sealed with waterproof surgical glue or tape to protect the area during healing. The glue or tape will naturally lift and fall off over time. Please do not remove it yourself.

- **Stitches:**  
All stitches are dissolvable and do not require removal.
- **Dressings:**  
If you have gauze or light padding beneath your surgical garment, change it daily or as directed by your surgeon. Keep the area clean and dry.
- **Showering:**  
You may shower, with assistance, 24–48 hours after surgery unless otherwise instructed. Your incisions are covered with waterproof dressings and require no special care during this time. Avoid direct water pressure to the surgical sites.
- **Lotions and Creams:**  
Do not apply lotions, ointments, or creams to your incisions until cleared by your surgeon, as doing so may interfere with healing or increase infection risk.
- **Support Garment:**  
Continue wearing your garment as directed to support healing and minimize swelling.
- **Nipple Grafts:**
  - Avoid direct pressure or rubbing over nipple grafts.
  - If dressings are placed over grafts, keep them intact and dry until your surgeon removes or changes them.

## How To Care for Your Drains

- Your surgeon may place small surgical drains to remove excess fluid and promote healing.
  - If drains are used, you will receive detailed care instructions in the handout: [Jackson-Pratt \(JP\) Drain Home Care Instructions](#).
  - Bring your drainage record to your follow-up visit so your surgeon can determine when drains can be safely removed.

## What to Expect

- **Bruising:**  
Some bruising is normal after surgery. Most bruises will fade within 2–3 weeks, changing from a purplish color to yellow or green as they heal.
- **Swelling:**  
Flattening and contour changes will continue as swelling resolves over 4–6 weeks.
- **Pain and Tightness:**  
You may experience a feeling of tightness or heaviness across the chest for several days to weeks. This is normal and will gradually improve as swelling decreases and tissues heal.
- **Nipple Sensation:**  
Changes in nipple or chest sensation are common after surgery. Depending on the surgical technique, sensation may return gradually over several months or may remain decreased or absent, especially if free nipple grafts were used. These changes are normal and do not affect healing.
- **Scarring:**  
Incision lines will initially appear pink or red and may feel firm. Scars typically fade over several months but can take up to a year to fully mature. Avoid direct sun exposure or tanning on scars for at least 12 months.
- **Itching:**  
Mild itching around incision sites is normal and a sign of healing. You may take Benadryl if needed for relief.
- **Fatigue:**  
You may feel tired for several days after surgery. Allow yourself time to rest and recover, and gradually resume normal activities as your energy returns.

## Emotional Recovery

It's normal to experience a wide range of emotions during recovery — including relief,

excitement, or unexpected sensitivity as your body adjusts. Healing from gender-affirming surgery is both physical and emotional. Support is available if you need it.

## Signs of Infection or Complications

It's important to monitor your recovery and be aware of any signs that may indicate an infection or complication. Contact your surgeon immediately if you experience any of the following:

- Increased redness, warmth, or swelling around the incision site
- Pus-like or foul-smelling drainage from the wound
- Fever over 101°F (38.3°C)
- Severe pain that is not relieved by prescribed medication
- Excessive bleeding or new bruising
- Persistent chills or feeling unwell

## Follow-up Care

**Prioritizing Appointments:** Attending follow-up appointments is crucial for monitoring your recovery and ensuring the effectiveness of your treatment. Please prioritize these appointments to ensure optimal care and address any concerns you may have.

## Patient Communication Guide: Who to Contact Post-Operation

Type of Concern	Contact Information	Instructions/Examples
Non-Urgent Questions or Concerns for Dr. Ching or Dr. Long	Email: <a href="mailto:clinicalrn@drshimching.com">clinicalrn@drshimching.com</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General recovery questions</li> <li>• Appointment inquiries</li> <li>• Prescription refills</li> </ul>
Urgent Questions or Concerns	Office Phone: (808) 585-8855 <u>After 5pm or on weekends:</u> Dr. Ching & Dr. Long @ Physician's Exchange (808) 524-2575	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling, bruising, or redness</li> <li>• Severe pain</li> <li>• High fever</li> <li>• Unusual discharge or odor</li> <li>• Uncontrolled bleeding</li> </ul>
<b>Medical Emergencies</b>	Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Severe calf pain</li> <li>• Signs of heart attack or pulmonary embolism</li> </ul>

### Our Commitment to You:

We are here to support you throughout your recovery journey. Your safety is our priority, and we encourage open communication. By guiding you on the most appropriate communication channels for your concerns, we aim to provide efficient and effective care, ensuring you feel fully supported & cared for.