

PRE-SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS: Preparing for Flap Breast Reconstruction

Breast reconstruction surgery, especially a flap reconstruction, can be daunting for many patients. It is important to realize that it is normal to have these feelings of anxiety or nervousness. Instead, try to stay optimistic and focus on positives. A negative attitude can affect your outcome. A good degree of anxiety can come from uncertainty, so patients are encouraged to ask as many questions as possible. This information is designed to help you prepare for your breast reconstruction surgery. Familiarizing yourself with the guidelines on how to prepare for the days leading to and including the day of surgery, will help ensure a safe experience, good outcome, and successful surgery.

Exercises Before and After Surgery

Breathing exercises are recommended to patients in order to help keep the lungs expanded and clear of mucous after surgery. Following surgery, breathing can become suboptimal secondary to the effect of the anesthesia and the lack of movement after having surgery. Although these exercises are optional, it is recommended to practice them before surgery to become accustomed to them. Practicing these exercises beforehand will also give you the opportunity to ask your physician or nurse in case there are any problems.

1. Deep Breathing (5x)

Deep breathing helps engage the lungs to cough more readily to move mucosal secretions.

- Take a deep breath through your nose and expand your ribs
- Breathe out through your mouth until the lungs are empty

2. Breathe & Cough (2x)

Coughing will help you clear the mucous from your lungs. It is important to understand that coughing will not damage the incision if done properly.

- Lie down on your back with your knees slightly bent and support the abdomen (incision site) with your hands or a pillow
- Take a deep breath in and cough sharply
- Discard any mucous; rest and repeat

Smoking

It is important to completely abstain from smoking 1-2 months before having surgery. The effects of nicotine linger on the body for weeks after you stop. Smoking increases the risk of serious post-operative complications and inhibits blood supply. Some of these complications include skin necrosis, delayed wound healing, and lung irritation. Consult with your primary care physician for help in quitting smoking.

Diet

Having good nutrition can lead to many positive benefits after surgery and improve recovery. Having a poor diet such as over-eating or high alcohol consumption can have a negative effect on your health and well-being.

Presurgical Testing

All patients will require presurgical testing. This is performed at the facility you will be having surgery. This is a good opportunity for your surgical team to review your medical history and identify any potential medical problems beforehand. All over the counter and prescription medications should be discussed at this visit. While presurgical testing is mandatory for all patients, clearance by your own primary care doctor is only necessary if you have any other medical problems. It is important to have scheduled all of your preoperative testing well in advance of your surgery. This will provide you and your physician ample time to complete all necessary clearances and paperwork.

Medications after surgery: Prescriptions for medications needed after hospital discharge will be given to you before your surgery. This will allow you to have the medications ready at home when you return from the hospital. Instructions on when and how often to take them will be reviewed with you in the hospital.

Healthy Habits: It is important to practice proper hygiene especially good hand-washing technique. It is important to avoid those who are ill as catching a virus or cold can delay your surgical date.

Confirm Surgical Plans: It is important to confirm that you have transportation to and from the hospital with a family member or friend.

Start Planning for Hospital Stay: Start to consider the items that you may bring to the hospital for your hospital stay. This may include comfort items such as magazines, books, loose clothes, or electronic devices that will keep you preoccupied during your stay. Most importantly, remember to bring your insurance card and government issued PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.

Relax: Surgery can be stressful. If you have any questions or concerns, call the office to have your questions answered. It is important to get plenty of rest.

Food/Fluid Restrictions: IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOT EAT OR DRINK THE NIGHT BEFORE SURGERY, AS THIS WILL CAUSE YOUR SURGERY TO BE CANCELLED. You should not have food or drinks after midnight (preceding your surgery).

Diet: Have a light meal the night before surgery, as many patients complain of constipation after surgery. It is expected that patients may not move their bowels for several days after surgery. Eating a high fiber diet and ensuring that you are properly hydrated in the days leading up to surgery will help minimize constipation.

THE MORNING OF SURGERY

Dress Appropriately: Wear comfortable clothing. This includes clothing that gives easy access to the site of surgery such as tops with zippers or buttons in the front. Please bring glasses with you and do not wear contact lenses.

DO NOT BRING: Jewelry or body piercing items. Do not bring valuable personal items such as money or credit cards. Do not wear perfume, deodorant, make-up, or talcum powder.

Arriving at the Hospital

Please arrive to the hospital at the specified time and location to ensure that your surgery can start on time. The office will give you the address for which hospital to go to and what time to arrive.

Surgical Admission

When you arrive at the hospital, please check in at the front desk. Once you are checked in and confirmed, you will be directed to the surgical admission area. During this time, you will be asked to remove your clothing and change into a hospital gown. You will sign a *Consent for Surgery* form. You will also receive any pre-operative medications and have an intravenous (IV) line started.

Before you enter the operating room, your surgeon and anesthesiologist will visit you in the preoperative waiting room. Your surgeon will come and mark your chest with markings on your body to facilitate the surgery. This is also a good opportunity to ask any last minute questions during this time. Once your surgeon and anesthesiologist have completed their pre-surgical checkmarks, a nurse will lead you to the operating room. At this time, you will be asked if you be given the opportunity to use bathroom. In addition, you will be asked to remove any glasses or dentures. These items will be kept with your belongings.

Presurgical Support

It is important to determine one family member or friend that will drive you to/from the hospital before being admitted to the hospital. When you arrive on the day of surgery, this family member or friend will be allowed to stay with you until you are taken into the operating room. When the surgery is complete, the plastic surgeon will speak to your loved ones. If they choose to leave the hospital, the surgeon will call them. In this event, make sure to provide the nurse with a contact number so your surgeon will be able to call them when the surgery is over.

Visiting Hours

After your surgery, family members and friends are permitted to visit you in recovery room and floor units. Although there is no set visiting hours, it is important to be mindful of the staff. In addition, please remember that you need to rest in order to recover.