

RICARDO A. MEADE, MD

Post-Operative Instructions and Information DIEP Flap/TRAM Flap

In the Hospital

- You can expect to stay in the hospital 5-7 days. The first few days will be in the Intensive Care Unit with nursing care to closely monitor your status and the pulses in the transplanted breast/flap. After stabilization, you will likely be transferred to the step down unit. Each unit in the hospital has individual visiting hours and restrictions. Your family will be notified of the policies once your admission to a specific unit is complete. Keep in mind the hours for Intensive Care will be more limited than those of the step down units.
- You will have several JP drains in place to remove any excess fluid from the surgical sites and surrounding tissues. These will be emptied frequently in the hospital. You will be expected to empty and record the drainage of these at home. The nursing staff at the hospital will educate you and provide you with a measuring cup for home use. It is normal for the drainage in these to change in both color, consistency and amount from bright or dark red to clear yellowish or pink. You will also have a urinary catheter in place for the first day or so. This will be removed when you are able to get out of bed with assistance to use a bedside commode. Please refer to the care of your Jackson-Pratt drain handout.
- Immediately post-op you will have IV fluids and an IV pain pump that you may control. If this is not controlling your pain, you need to let your nursing staff know. You will start on clear liquids and progress to a regular diet as tolerated. As soon as you are eating some regular foods, you will be offered oral pain medication and the IV pain medication will be weaned.
- Your breasts and abdomen will be somewhat swollen and you will be instructed to sleep with the head of the bed elevated to assist in draining the swelling. You will need to walk flexed and sleep with a pillow under your knees for about 2 weeks.
- You can expect a long bikini line incision from hip bone to hip bone. It may have visible or internal sutures. You will have a circumferential incision around the flap of the breast as well. You will have an abdominal binder which will need to be worn for 4 weeks.

Home Care Instructions

- Have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for a few days.
- Follow a balanced, LOW SODIUM diet. Decreased activity may promote constipation, so you may want to add more raw fruit to your diet. Over the counter stool softeners are recommended to help prevent constipation.
- Take pain medication and antibiotics as prescribed. Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin for 2 weeks following surgery.
- DO NOT SMOKE, as smoking delays wound healing and increases the risk of wound complications.

Activities

- You will need to walk /stand slightly bent over for approximately 1-2 weeks after surgery. Standing completely upright places tension on the abdominal incision.
- Start walking (as soon as possible, this helps to reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.
- You will need to sleep with your head elevated and a pillow under your knees, or in a reclining chair.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking any pain medications (narcotics). Do not drive until you feel you have full range of motion with your arms.
- You will need to avoid lifting over 10 pounds for 4-6 weeks, and expect to limit your normal activities of daily living during this time. You will be much more fatigued than usual and will need more rest during the first few weeks post-operatively.
- Refrain from vigorous activity for 4 weeks.
- Restrict excessive use of arms for at least 5-7 days.
- Refrains from physical contact with breasts for 3-4 weeks.
- Body contact sports should be avoided for 6-8 weeks.

Drains

- If you have drains, please refer to the handout "CARE OF YOUR JACKSON-PRATT DRAINS".
- **YOU MAY NOT SHOWER while your drains are in place.**
- Remember to call in your 24 hour drain total to the office (214-823-1691) every day.
- Your drains will be removed when the DAILY TOTAL amount is less than 25mL for 2 CONSECUTIVE DAYS.
- Keeping track of the drainage amounts, is important to your healing process. If incorrect drainage amount is recorded and the drains are removed too soon, THE RISK OF INFECTION AND FLUID BUILD UP INCREASES.

Incision Care

- Dressings may be removed at home _____.

- Once dressings are removed apply bacitracin (Neosporin) ointment twice a day for one week along the incision. You may purchase non-adherent dressings or gauze at a drug store to put on over the ointment to protect your clothing.
- If you were given an abdominal binder, you must wear it round-the clock or until otherwise instructed by Dr. Meade.
- Do not wear a bra until instructed by Dr. Meade.
- **YOU MUST NOT SHOWER WHILE DRAINS ARE IN PLACE.** You will be able to take a full shower one or two days after your drain(s) are removed. Before that you make take a sponge bath. Use a mild soap without heavy perfume such as baby shampoo. Let the warm soapy water run over the incisions. **Do not wet your drain site(s).** Do not scrub the incisions or drain sites and pat the incisions dry, do not rub. **DO NOT TAKE A TUB BATH, OR SUBMERGE INCISIONS UNDER WATER** until Dr. Meade or his nurse has told you to begin taking a full shower.

What to Expect

- Bruising, swelling, numbness, sharpness and burning along the chest and abdomen are common after the surgery. This will subside over the next few weeks.
- The abdomen will be tight and much flatter in appearance.
- The majority of swelling will subside in 3-4 weeks, but some swelling may persist for up to 3 months.
- You will walk bent over and will slowly rise over the first 1-2 weeks.

IMPORTANT- Call the office (214-823-1691) for any increased redness, swelling, foul-smelling wound drainage, wound separation, severe/uncontrolled pain or temperature >101.5, bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure, loss of feeling or motion. Do not hesitate to call for any other questions or concerns.

**IF you have not already scheduled a follow up post-operative appointment, PLEASE call the office at 214-823-1691 to set up your appointment.

Patient _____ Nurse _____ Date _____