

## Surgery ~ TE Recon Post-Op Instructions

### TISSUE EXPANDER RECONSTRUCTION

#### POST-OP INSTRUCTION SHEET

The following post-operative instructions are specific to your procedure & are meant to serve as guidelines to help you through your recovery. Please read them carefully.

#### **EMERGENCIES**

A hematoma is the most common emergent event within the first 24 hours. If one breast begins to swell to twice the size of the opposite side, call Dr. Cooper immediately. Rest assured ~ this is not a subtle event! You will most certainly notice a significantly larger, more firm, painful breast.

For routine matters, please call the office during business hours. If you have an emergency that cannot wait, I am available by cell phone (307) 699-3115 on evenings & weekends. Please respect my family time & call ONLY for urgent or emergent issues. Non-emergent phone calls after hours & on weekends will be subject to a \$50.00 fee. Examples of urgent or emergent issues include the following: sudden onset, extreme swelling of the surgical site, redness / warmth involving your incision(s), or unilateral calf pain or swelling. If I do not answer right away, leave a message. I will call you back! If you have a life-threatening emergency, such as crushing chest pain or shortness of breath, call 911 immediately. If you have any questions on a Thursday or Friday, please call the office to have those questions answered. Do not delay those questions & have those issues become an urgent matter over the weekend.

#### **NARCOTICS AND PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS**

Nausea is normal when taking multiple medications. To minimize this, avoid taking medications on an empty stomach. Try to stagger your medications 20-30 minutes apart. You may “halve” the pain pills or muscle relaxers if they are too strong for you. If your pain is relatively well-controlled, you may alternate your pain medication with extra-strength Tylenol. Motrin / Aleve / Ibuprofen may also be used beginning 7-10 days following your procedure.

You will receive ONE refill on your prescription pain medication. Refills on all prescriptions will not be authorized after hours or on weekends. Please plan ahead accordingly. If you are taking narcotics for any other reason prior to your procedure, please take this into consideration. Consultation with your pain management physician prior to your surgery is highly encouraged and is the responsibility of the patient.

#### **ANESTHESIA**

You may experience a sore throat after surgery. This is common after general anesthesia & will resolve in a few days.

#### **NAUSEA**

Nausea is common after general anesthesia. Anti-nausea medication will be prescribed for you. A clear liquid diet is recommended until the nausea subsides, after which time you may resume a regular diet.

## **BANDAGES**

Your incisions are closed with multiple layers of dissolvable stitches and covered with Dermabond (which is very similar to superglue). Nevertheless, your bandages may have some drainage with blood-tinged fluid prior to your first follow-up appointment. This is normal. If your dressings become saturated, you may reinforce the original dressing with dry gauze and paper tape. Change as often as necessary.

## **PERSONAL CARE**

Please do not shower until you have been seen for your first post-op visit. This generally occurs 7-10 days after your procedure. You may take a “sponge bath,” but do not get your incisions wet. Lume wipes & deodorant are useful during your early post-op recovery ([www.lumedeoderant.com](http://www.lumedeoderant.com)). My Aunt loved these during her breast cancer recovery! No tub baths for at least 6 weeks.

## **DRAIN CARE**

Careful attention to drain hygiene is important to prevent infection. Do not remove the sterile dressings around your drains. Please wash your hands before and after caring for your drains. Strip / Empty / Record Drain output every 8 hours. Bring drain record with you to **EVERY** post-op appointment.

Your drains will not be removed until we have seen your drain record to assess not only the quantity, but also the trend of the drain output. **DO NOT REMOVE YOUR OWN DRAINS!** We are not responsible for infection, seroma formation (fluid accumulation), or wound healing complications if you choose to do so.

## **DIET**

If you experience nausea after surgery, a clear liquid diet is advisable until the nausea subsides. Otherwise, there are no dietary restrictions after surgery. Drink plenty of water! Water intake & stool softeners will help minimize constipation from narcotics (pain medication) after surgery.

## **CONSTIPATION**

Constipation is a common complaint after surgery & can be associated with anesthesia and narcotics (pain medications). Hydration & utilizing pain medication only when absolutely necessary will help minimize this. Stool softeners & laxatives (Colace, Dulcolax, Miralax) are over-the-counter medications that can help alleviate your symptoms. If these are insufficient, a Fleets Enema is the next best option.

## **SLEEP**

Sleeping in a flexed position (with pillows or in a recliner) is recommended for comfort for 1-2 weeks after surgery. You may gradually resume sleeping in your natural, preferred position thereafter.

## **ITCHING / RASHES**

Itching around your incisions is normal & is to be expected after surgery. It is considered a sign of healing. However, severe itching with redness or blistering can be a sign of a reaction to medications or adhesive. If you experience itching with redness or blistering around your incisions, gently remove your

dressings & take an antihistamine. Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra, Zyrtec, or Xyzal are all acceptable. You may also use Benadryl cream, but do not use any topical that contains hydrocortisone.

Please let us know if you have a sensitivity to adhesives or tape prior to surgery. This will help avoid skin sensitivity involving your incisions.

## **GARMENT**

There is no need for a bra following this procedure. However, if you feel more comfortable with coverage, your surgical bra is sufficient. You may also wear a soft (non-underwire) bra or a loosely-fitted sports bra if you feel more comfortable. Many patients have enjoyed this soft, front-close surgical bra which may be found at [www.amazon.com/Carole-Martin-Full-Freedom-Comfor](http://www.amazon.com/Carole-Martin-Full-Freedom-Comfor)

## **STITCHES**

Most (if not all) of your stitches are beneath the skin. They are dissolvable and will not need to be removed. Occasionally, however, you will feel a stitch beneath the skin which will need to be removed at your next post-operative visit. This is normal.

## **DRIVING**

Please wait at least 24 hours after you have discontinued prescription pain medication to operate a vehicle.

## **EXERCISE**

Walk frequently – once every hour while awake. You are encouraged to use your arms for any typical daily activity. No heavy lifting (<10 lb) for ~2-3 weeks. You may resume light exercise (treadmill, elliptical) after ~2-3 weeks, with gradual return to “normal” level of activity thereafter.

No push-ups of upper body exercises for ~6 weeks. You may return to work whenever you feel as though you are able.

## **SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

You may resume sexual activity once your drains have been removed. Please remember that you have recently had a major surgical procedure and utilize good judgement.

## **ALCOHOL**

You may consume alcoholic beverages once you are no longer taking (narcotics) prescription pain medication. However, please take into consideration your other medications and how they may interact with alcohol.

## **FEVER**

If you experience any increase in warmth, redness, or a fever (>101.5), please call the office.

**TRAVEL**

No travel for 4 weeks following your procedure.

**OTHER**

No swimming (chlorine / saltwater / other) until your drains have been removed.

NO HEAT or ICE to surgical site. Your recently operated skin cannot sense extremes of temperatures, which can result in heat or cold burns and compromise your results.

Arnica and Bromelain are recommended homeopathic supplements which facilitate resolution of bruising and swelling after surgery. These can be found online at [www.vitamedica.com/product/arnica-bromelain](http://www.vitamedica.com/product/arnica-bromelain)