



The Surgical Institute
at True North

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Post-Operative Breast Surgery Instructions

General Instructions

The instructions listed below are to better assist you in your recovery following your procedure. All of the instructions are general guidelines, understanding that every patient recovers differently. As always, we are here to help you in any way we can. Do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions or concerns.

Restrictions

Do not drive a vehicle or operate heavy machinery while taking narcotic pain medication. Once you are no longer taking pain medication, you should only drive when you know you can react to an emergency situation such as slamming on your breaks.

Dr. Miller does not place any lifting restrictions on his patients following breast surgery. Lifting can be uncomfortable however, and should be done based on comfort level.

Wound care

You will leave the hospital with a gauze dressing and tape covering your wound. An ace bandage will also be in place to keep compression to the breast. The ace bandage should be kept in place. Feel free to rewrap the ace bandages as needed. The ace bandage should not be taken off for more than 30 minutes of time. This includes while you sleep.

The gauze covering your wound may be removed 48 hours after your procedure if the wound is no longer draining. At that time, you may remove the dressing. Showering is okay once the dressings have been removed. Baths and swimming should be avoided until you receive the okay from our office at your follow up appointment. The ace bandage should be worn following your shower. Use 4x4 gauze dressings to cover the incision and protect it from the ace bandage.

Drain Care (typically placed with mastectomy and axillary dissections)

-Empty the drain and strip the tubing 2-3 times daily or more often if the plastic squeeze bottle fills up. This helps prevent clogging in the tube and allows for fluid to drain from the body. If you've had a lumpectomy, you may not have a drain in place.

-Starting from the top of the tube (the area closest to the skin), firmly grasp the tubing with your thumb and index finger with one hand. With the other hand, use the index finger and thumb to move the fluid down the tubing (this is called "stripping")

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-Uncap the small spout on the bottle and squeeze the fluid into the measuring cup provided to you at the hospital. If you were not provided a measuring cup, be sure to contact our office and we will provide one to you.

-Measure the amount of drainage by writing down the closest number to the level of fluid on the measuring cup. After measuring, discard the fluid into the toilet. Bring your measurements to your follow-up appointment.

-Squeeze the bottle flat until most of the air is out. Replace the cap while squeezing the bottle. This helps maintain suction and encourages the fluid in your breast drain.

Pain Medication

A prescription for pain medication will be given to you when you leave the hospital. The prescription is typically for Norco (Hydrocodone-Acetaminophen) &.5-325mg. You may take 1-2 every 6 hours for pain. Many patients do not require a narcotic pain medication following surgery and choose to use Tylenol or Ibuprofen in its place. If you are comfortable, do not be afraid to use the pain medication prescribed. Be sure not to take both Norco and Tylenol together as this is too much Tylenol for a person to take at one time. Ibuprofen may be used with Norco. If you have an allergy to hydrocodone or Tylenol, a different pain medication will be provided to you at discharge.

Some patients will experience constipation while taking Norco. You will also go home with a prescription for Colace 100 mg. This may be used three times per day and should help keep your stools soft. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids.

Exercise

-Arm exercises can be started 2-3 days following your surgery and up to 3 times daily. These exercises can be very helpful in regaining your normal range of motion. See the exercise sheet attached from the American Cancer Society.

-You may need to take your prescribed pain medication prior to doing your exercises. If you are not taking narcotic pain medication, Tylenol or Ibuprofen is recommended before doing your exercises.

Your Follow-up appointment

-If you have a drain in place, this may be removed at your first follow-up appointment. The suture that attached the tubing to your skin is snipped and the tube easily slides out of the body. This process typically takes less than 30 seconds and should not cause much discomfort.

-Bring the sports bra discussed at your pre-operative appointment to your follow-up. The ace bandage will be removed at this time and you will be allowed to wear a sports bra if your drain has been removed. This sports bra should work for two weeks after your follow-up appointment.

Contact the office if:

You have a temperature greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit, or you have increased swelling, redness, warmth, or drainage around the incision or drainage tube site.