

# *Independence Surgical Clinic*

## **Division of Signature Medical Group**

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### **Mastectomy Instructions**

#### **Risks of Surgery**

Mastectomy is usually a very safe procedure, but these are some of the risks that can occur after surgery.

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Arm swelling (lymphedema)
- Shoulder pain or stiffness
- Numbness on chest and underarm/inner arm
- Scarring or firm tissue at the incision site
- Hematoma (collection of blood under skin that may require additional surgery)
- Seroma (collection of fluid under skin that may need to be removed in the office)
- Winged scapula (very rare complication resulting in protrusion of shoulder blade)

#### **Bra**

Before the day of surgery, we recommend that you purchase a sports bra to have for use after surgery. It should be snug-fitting and should close in the front with a zipper or hook and eye. We recommend the Danskin or Avia front zip (more support) or 2-pack Fruit of the Loom Comfort Front-Close Sports Bra (soft cotton bra with hook and eye front closure) (all sometimes available at Wal-Mart); Kohl's often also has good options. You should purchase your regular size, though some people report they run slightly small, so you may want to try it on first. We suggest having two so that you can wash one and have the other available. You can bring it with you the day of surgery so that you have it in the hospital.

#### **Surgery**

The morning of surgery, if you are having a lymph node procedure done, you will go to the nuclear medicine radiology department to have an injection for this. When this is complete, you will go to the operating room for the procedure. After surgery, you may notice a bright blue spot on your chest if you had a lymph node procedure. This will go away a few days after surgery. You may also have blue or green urine or stools after surgery.

After surgery, you will have a bra with dressing in place and at least one drain. You will stay overnight in the hospital for one night. The nurses will be sure that your pain is controlled. Most patients go home the next day. The nurses will teach you how to take care of your drains before going home.

You will wear a bra at all times after surgery. You will have sticky tape strips over your incision, and

you will leave the hospital with a large amount of gauze placed in the bra on the side of your surgery. It is important that the gauze dressing is in place to apply light pressure at all times including sleeping. It is ok to change your bra as needed to wash it, just replace the gauze or fill it with new gauze or sanitary napkins to continue light pressure. You will continue to wear the bra and gauze dressing until after your drains are out.

## **Drains**

You will have one or two drains on each side. They should be attached to the bottom edge of your bra with safety pins. The nurses in the hospital will teach you how to empty these. You need to empty each drain two times a day and write down the amount emptied for each. Every time the drains are emptied, write down the amount for each drain and the day and time emptied. Bring the drain record with you to each appointment after surgery. The drains will be removed when the drainage in one 24h period is less than 30 cc.

## **Activity**

Walking may be resumed right away and is strongly encouraged. You will need to avoid heavy lifting, more strenuous exercise, and general housework other than very light activities, until your drains have been removed. You may resume driving when your drains are out, you are not taking pain medications, and you can “crank the wheel” and “slam on the brakes” without discomfort. You may shower after your drain(s) have been removed. Until then, you may sponge bathe only.

You will visit with Occupational Therapy before surgery and also again the day after your surgery. They will teach you exercises to do after surgery to help prevent complications and limited range of motion. You will begin the Phase 1 exercises on the first day after surgery and continue these daily. You will change to the Phase 2 exercises once the drains are out.

Depending on your type of work, you may be able to return to work within 3-6 weeks after surgery. Every person is different. You can discuss this with your doctor specifically after surgery.

## **Diet and Medications**

You may resume your normal diet when you are at home. Drink a lot of water – 8-10 glasses a day is best – as many people experience constipation when using pain pills. You may want to also take a stool softener like Colace two times a day while using your pain pills. Most mastectomy patients without reconstruction have very little pain after surgery. Tylenol or Advil is usually enough to control the pain, but you may be given a stronger pain medicine prescription to have just in case.

## **Questions – Call 816-373-4646**

Please call us with any question you may have. You can reach us at any time. If you have any of the below, please contact us right away.

- Pain unrelieved by pain medications
- Fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Blood-soaked dressings
- Increasing swelling or redness
- Foul smelling drainage from incision
- Medication reaction
- Worsening depression mood or anxiety

