Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Caring for Yourself After Breast Reduction Surgery

This information explains how to care for yourself after your breast reduction surgery.

About your breast reduction surgery

Breast reduction surgery, also known as mammoplasty, is done to remove extra fat, tissue, and skin from your breast. This will help lift and reshape your breast and improve the positioning of your nipple. You can choose to have breast reduction surgery after or at the same time as another procedure to help your breasts match in size and shape.

If you're having a lumpectomy (surgery to remove a tumor from your breast), you may have the option to have an oncoplastic reduction at the same time as your surgery or a short time after. This is when your plastic surgeon rearranges the tissue remaining in your breast during your surgery. You may choose to have a reduction on your other breast so that your breasts are more similar in size.

You may need to get a mammogram before this surgery. Your healthcare provider will give you more information.

You will be able to go home the same day as your surgery. You must have a responsible care partner take you home. A responsible care partner is someone who can help you get home safely and report concerns to your healthcare providers, if needed. Make sure to plan this before the day of your surgery or procedure. It's OK to use a taxi or car service, but you must still have a responsible care partner with you.

After your surgery

Incisions (surgical cuts)

- After your surgery, your incisions will be closed with dissolvable or non-dissolvable sutures (stitches).
- If your incisions were closed with dissolvable sutures, the sutures will dissolve on their own. They don't need to be taken out.
- If your incisions were closed with non-dissolvable sutures, your healthcare provider will take them out about 2 weeks after your surgery.
- You may have small pieces of surgical tape (Steri-Strips™) on your incisions. They'll loosen and fall off by themselves.
- You will have a gauze bandage covering your incisions. This will be held in place by your bra. Change the gauze as needed (such as if it gets dirty, wet, or there's a lot of drainage) and after you shower.

Drainage

- You may have small amounts of bloody drainage coming from your incisions for a few days after your surgery. This is normal.
- You may see more drainage especially after showering.
- If you have heavy, bright red, bloody drainage, or if your breast becomes firm or swollen in a short period of time, place extra padding in your surgical bra and call your healthcare provider.
- The bottom of your breast where the incisions come together may take a little longer to heal than the rest of the incisions.

Jackson-Pratt® (JP) drain

You may have a JP drain when you leave the hospital. A JP drain is a small egg-shaped container that's connected to a tube in your chest. It drains fluid from your surgical site.

If you have a JP drain, your healthcare provider will give you more information

about it, including how long you'll have it in place. They'll also teach you how to care for it before you go home and give you the resource *Caring for Your Jackson-Pratt Drain* (www.mskcc.org/pe/jackson-pratt).

Caring for yourself at home

Showering

- Do not shower for the first 48 hours (2 days) after your surgery. After the first 48 hours, you can take a full shower. Follow your surgeon's instructions for how to shower.
- You may shower 24 to 48 hours after your drains are removed. Your healthcare provider will let you know when you can shower.
- When you begin showering, take a shower every day to help keep your incision clean.
- Before entering the shower, remove your bra and the gauze pad covering your incision.
- Check the temperature of the water first with your back or hand because numbness may prevent you from feeling heat in the affected area.
- Wash with warm water and gentle, fragrance-free soap. Gently clean your upper incisions and drain sites, and rinse well.
- Do not aim the shower stream directly at your breast. Aim it at your upper back or your arm. Let the water run softly over your breast. Pat your incisions dry with a clean towel. Don't rub them.
- Do not take tub baths until your incisions and drain sites are fully healed because soaking may increase the risk of infection. You may be able to take tub baths about 6 to 8 weeks after your surgery but speak with your doctor before you do.
- Talk with your healthcare provider before you use deodorant, lotion, or cream anywhere near your incisions as they're healing. Healing usually takes about 4 to 6 weeks.

Clothing

- Wear a soft supportive bra like the one your nurse gave you for 6 weeks after your surgery, even while sleeping. You can remove your bra when you shower.
- Don't wear a bra that has an underwire while your incisions are healing.

Medicine

- You'll get a prescription for pain medicine to help manage your pain after surgery.
- Anesthesia (medicine to make you sleep during surgery) and pain medicine can cause constipation (having fewer bowel movements than usual). Read *How to Manage Constipation* (www.mskcc.org/pe/constipation) to learn more.

Physical activity

- Do not lift, push, or pull objects heavier than 5 to 10 pounds (2.3 to 5.4 kilograms) for 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. Keep this in mind when grocery shopping, lifting children, or doing laundry.
- Do not do strenuous exercises (such as running, jogging, or jumping) for 6 weeks after surgery.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher.
- Redness, warmth, or increased pain or swelling on your breast.
- Chills.
- Heavy, bright red, bloody drainage coming from your incision.
- Your breast becomes firm or swollen in a short period of time.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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