Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Fat Injection After Breast Reconstruction

This information explains fat injections after your breast reconstruction surgery. It also explains how to care for yourself at home after your fat injection procedure.

About fat injections

Fat injections can help your breast look more natural after your breast reconstruction surgery. The injections can soften creases and indented scars in your breast.

The area where the fat injection is given is called the recipient site. The recipient site is usually in your cleavage area, the upper part of your breast, the side of your breast, or all 3.

The area where the fat is taken from is called the donor site. The donor site can be on your abdomen (belly), buttocks, or thighs. Before your procedure, you and your healthcare provider will decide where your donor site will be. You may have more than 1 donor site if more fat is needed or if you have more than 1 fat injection procedure.

What to expect during your fat injection procedure

Your fat injection procedure will be done in the operating room with general anesthesia (medication that makes you sleep during your procedure). Most procedures are done in the operating room with general anesthesia.

During your procedure, your healthcare provider will take fat from your donor site and inject it into the recipient site in your breast using a needle, small incisions (surgical cuts), or both. The procedure will take 1 to 2 hours.

After your procedure

- You will have 1 to 2 dissolvable sutures (stitches) at your donor site incisions. You may also have Steri-Strips™ (strips of paper tape) over the incisions. The area will be covered with a gauze dressing (bandage).
- You may have a dissolvable suture, Steri-Strips, or both at your recipient site incisions on your breast.

You may have scabbing at your recipient and donor sites. You may also have swelling, bruising, and soreness for 1 to 2 weeks after your procedure. Follow the guidelines in the next section to help manage these.

Your healthcare provider may give you a prescription for antibiotics to take at home after your procedure.

Instructions for caring for yourself at home

- Keep the bandages on your donor site for 48 hours (2 days) after your procedure. While the bandages are in place:
  - Don’t shower or get the bandages wet. You can take a sponge bath, but be careful not to get your bandages wet.
  - You may have some pink or reddish discharge (liquid) coming from your incisions. This is normal.
  - Change the bandages if they get wet or dirty.
- After 2 days, you can take the bandages off your donor site.
  - Don’t take your stitches out. They will dissolve on their own in 1 to 2 weeks.
  - If you have Steri-Strips on your incision, don’t take them off. Your healthcare provider will remove them during your first follow-up appointment.
  - When you shower, you can gently clean your incisions using soap and water.
- Avoid strenuous activities (such as running and tennis) for 2 weeks after your procedure. Most people can go back to doing their usual activities after 2 weeks. Follow

your healthcare provider's instructions.

- If you have soreness or discomfort around your incisions, you can take an over-the counter pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®). You can also take ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) or naproxen (Aleve®) 48 hours (2 days) after surgery. Often, these medications work best to manage pain after this procedure. If these OTC medications don't ease your pain, you can also take the pain medication your healthcare provider prescribed instead.
- Call your healthcare provider's office to schedule a follow-up appointment for 1 to 2 weeks after your procedure.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Redness, warmth, or increased pain around your incisions.
- Any changes in your incision sites, such as pus-like drainage, oozing, or separation (the sides of the incision coming apart).
- A fever of 101 °F (38.3 °C) or higher.
- Chills that make you shake.
- Sudden shortness of breath or any difficulty breathing.

- New swelling, redness, or drainage in another part of your body.
- Pain that isn't eased by your prescription pain medication.

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.

Fat Injection After Breast Reconstruction - Last updated on April 19, 2023
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