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PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Nipple Reconstruction

This information will help you get ready for your nipple reconstruction.

## About Nipple Reconstruction

After your breast surgery, you may choose to have nipple reconstruction. This is a procedure that rebuilds your nipple. About 3 to 4 months after your nipple reconstruction, your doctor will tattoo your areola (brown circle around your nipple). Nipple reconstruction can be done in your doctor's office or in the operating room.

If your nipple reconstruction will be in the operating room, follow the instructions in *Getting Ready for Surgery* ([www.mskcc.org/pe/getting\\_ready\\_surgery](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/getting_ready_surgery)). Your nurse will give you more information.

## Before Your Procedure

If your procedure will be done in the operating room, follow the instructions that your nurse gave you. You will need someone to go home with you after your procedure.

If your procedure will be done in doctor's office, you may be given a prescription for antibiotics to take before your procedure.

## The Day of Your Procedure

- Wear a thin, nonpadded bra or a form-fitting, light-colored shirt. This will help you and your surgeon finalize where your nipple will be placed.
- Bring loose clothing to wear home after your procedure. You don't want to

have any pressure or rubbing on your incisions (surgical cuts).

- If you'll be going home in a car, bring a small pillow to place between the seat belt and your incision.

## If your procedure will be done in the operating room:

Follow the instructions in *Getting Ready for Surgery*

([www.mskcc.org/pe/getting\\_ready\\_surgery](http://www.mskcc.org/pe/getting_ready_surgery)) and the instructions for eating and drinking below.

### Instructions for eating and drinking if you're having your procedure in the operating room:

- Do not eat anything after midnight the night before your procedure. This includes hard candy and gum.
- Between midnight and up until 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time, you may drink a total of 12 ounces of water (see figure).
- Starting 2 hours before your scheduled arrival time, do not eat or drink anything. This includes water.



## If your procedure will be done in your doctor's office:

- You can eat a regular breakfast the morning of your procedure.
- You can shower as you normally do, but don't put any lotion, cream, or powder on your chest.
- If you received a prescription for antibiotics, take them as instructed 1 hour before your procedure. If you have any questions about this, call your surgeon's office.

# After Your Procedure

If your procedure was done in the operating room, you will need someone to go home with you. If your procedure was done in your doctor's office, you can go home on your own.

## Clothing

- When you leave the hospital or clinic, wear comfortable and loose clothing. Don't wear clothing that rubs against your incisions.
- If you will be traveling by car, place a small pillow or towel between the seat belt and your chest right above your incision. This will keep the seatbelt from putting pressure on your incision. Don't let the seat belt rub against your incisions.
- For the first 2 weeks after your procedure, avoid wearing any clothing that puts pressure on your nipple. If you wear a bra, make sure it fits loosely.

## Nipple care

- You can shower 48 hours after your procedure.
- If you have any bandages, remove them when you shower. You don't need to put another bandage on your incisions after you shower, unless your doctor gave you other instructions.
- Gently wash your nipple with soap and water. Don't use a washcloth or a scrubbing cloth or brush.

## Physical activity

Your healthcare provider will give you instructions on what exercises and movements you can do while your incisions are healing. Make sure to follow those instructions.

Check with your healthcare provider before starting heavy exercises, such as:

- Running
- Jogging
- Lifting weights

## Follow-up appointment

Your first follow-up appointment will be \_\_\_\_\_ days after your procedure. If you have sutures (stitches) that need to be removed, they will be removed during this appointment.

## When to Call Your Healthcare Provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have:

- A fever of 101° F (38.3° C) or higher
- Redness, warmth, or increased pain in your nipple area
- Shaking chills
- Flu-like symptoms (such as fever, headache, body aches, and chills)
- Shortness of breath
- Drainage coming from your incisions
- Any type of skin infection on any part of your body

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

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