Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Caring for Yourself After Your Breast Implant Surgery

This information will help you care for yourself after your breast implant surgery.

After your surgery

- You will have gauze covering your incision(s) (surgical cut). The gauze will be held in place by your bra or clear tape.
- You may have a Jackson-Pratt drain (JP drain) in place when you leave the hospital. This is a plastic drain that's put in your chest to drain the fluid from your surgery. Your healthcare provider will take out the JP drain 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery.
  - Your nurse will teach you how to care for your JP drain before you go home. They'll give you the resource *Caring for Your Jackson-Pratt Drain* (www.mskcc.org/pe/jackson-pratt).
- You will get a prescription for pain medicine and an antibiotic (medicine to treat infections).
- If you'll be traveling by car, place a small pillow or towel between the seat belt and your reconstructed breast. The skin over your reconstructed breast is often thin and can be scraped easily. This can lead to infection.

At home

Caring for your chest

If you have gauze that's held in place by your bra

Take off the gauze 48 hours (2 days) after your surgery. After you take it off, put on a new piece of gauze. Do this for each incision.

Make sure to change your gauze at least once a day. Do this every day until your follow-up appointment. At your follow-up appointment, your healthcare provider will tell you when you can stop doing this.

If you have gauze that's held in place by clear tape

Take off the gauze 48 hours (2 days) after your surgery. After you take it off, put on a new piece of gauze. Do this for each incision. You will not need tape anymore. Your bra will hold the gauze in place.

Make sure to change your gauze at least once a day. Do this every day until your follow-up appointment. At your follow-up appointment, your healthcare provider will tell you when you can stop doing this.

Sutures (stitches)

To create a natural fold under your breast, your doctor placed sutures under your skin. You will not see them. They will dissolve on their own and do not need to be taken out.

The sutures may cause you to feel a pinching or pulling sensation that can be painful. Take your pain medicine if you have any pain.

Adjusting to the implant

For the first 48 hours after your surgery:

- You may have a slight fever. Your temperature could reach 101° F (38.3° C).
- The skin around your reconstructed breast may become pink or red.

These are not signs of an infection. They're signs that your body is adjusting to

the implant.

Call your doctor if:

- The redness or fever does not get better 48 hours after your surgery.
- Your temperature gets higher than 101° F (38.3° C).

Showering

- Do not shower or get your gauze wet for the first 48 hours after your surgery.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about showering with your JP drain in place.
- Avoid baths, hot tubs, and swimming pools for at least 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Talk with your healthcare provider before you use deodorant, lotion, or cream anywhere near your incision(s).

Clothing

- Wear a soft, supportive bra for 6 weeks after your surgery, even while sleeping. You can take off your bra when you shower.
- Do not wear an underwire bra for 6 weeks after your surgery. If you want to wear an underwire bra after this time, talk with your doctor. They'll tell you if you can wear one or not.

Medicine

- Your doctor will give you medicine to treat your pain as needed.
- Your doctor will give you an antibiotic. Take it the way your doctor tells you to.

Limits on physical activity

You can go back to most activities right after your surgery, but here are some things you should avoid:

- Do not do any exercise that will make your chest tight (such as push-ups) for 6 weeks. Talk with your healthcare provider if you have any questions about this.
- Do not lift or carry anything heavier than 5 pounds (2.3 kilograms) for 4 to 6 weeks. This includes children and pets.
- Check with your healthcare provider before starting any heavy exercise, such as running, jogging, or lifting weights.

When you exercise, wear a soft and supportive bra.

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 both in your breast area
- Pain or swelling in your breast area that's getting worse
- Shaking chills
- Trouble breathing
- Drainage or oozing from your incision(s)

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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