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Postoperative Instructions

DIEP BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

A hospital stay of 4-5 days is expected.

Have someone drive you home after surgery and help you at home for 1-2 days.

Get plenty of rest; follow balanced diet.

Decreased activity and pain medication may promote constipation, so you may want to add more fresh fruit to your diet, and be sure to drink plenty of fluids.

Take pain medication as prescribed. Do not take aspirin or any products containing aspirin until approved by your physician.

Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medication.

If you are taking vitamins with iron, resume these as tolerated.

Do not smoke, as smoking delays healing and increases the risk of complications.

Activities

Walk as soon as possible, as this helps reduce swelling and lowers the chance of blood clots.

Do not drive until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medications.

Do not drive until you have full range of motion with your arms.

No strenuous activity for 6 weeks.

No lifting more than 5 pounds for 6 weeks then gradually increase activity as tolerated.

Wear your abdominal binder for a total of six weeks.

Resume social and employment activities in approximately 3 weeks.

Return to work for light office duty in 3-4 weeks

Return to work for rigorous duties in about 8 weeks.

No swimming for 6 weeks.

You may participate in post-mastectomy physical therapy to your arms and shoulders in 2 weeks.

You may participate in physical therapy involving your abdomen (tummy) in 4 weeks.

Incision Care

You may shower 48 hours after removal of the drainage tubes.

Avoid exposing scars to sun for at least 12 months.

Always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 30 or greater).

Keep steri-strips in place.

Keep incisions clean, dry and inspect daily for signs of infection.

No tub soaking while sutures or drains are in place.

Do not use a heating pad on your abdomen; heat may burn the area.

Do not wear a bra.

Sleep with head slightly elevated and with pillows under knees.

A lounge chair or recliner may be comfortable for sleeping.

What To Expect

A hospital stay of 4-5 days is expected.

Maximum discomfort will occur the first few days following surgery; you may experience incision discomfort and generalized discomfort in your breasts and abdomen.

Oozing from the incisions can be expected.

Appearance

A new breast mound will be constructed with sutures around the outer edges.

The abdomen will be tight and much flatter in appearance.

The majority of swelling will subside in 3-4 weeks, but some swelling may persist for up to 3 months.

You will walk bent over and will slowly rise over the first 1-2 weeks.

Follow-Up Care

Sutures will be dissolvable and will be clipped to skin level on the first or second clinic appointment.

Drains are removed when the drainage is less than 30mL/day for 2 days.

When To Call

If you have increased swelling or bruising.

If swelling and redness persist after a few days.

If you have increased redness along the incision.

If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.

If you have any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.

If you have an oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.

If you have any yellowish or greenish drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.

If you have bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.

If you have loss of feeling or motion.

For Medical Questions, Please Call:

(615) 921-2100 Monday-Thursday 9:00 AM-5:00 PM and Fridays 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM. After hours and on weekends, the answering service will contact Dr. Wendel or the plastic surgeon on call.