

Discharge Instructions: Breast Reconstruction with Abdominal Flaps – Plastic and Reconstruction Surgery

These instructions explain what you or your care partner needs to do to continue your care at home. Please read and follow these instructions carefully.

What to Expect

- In general, it is important to avoid pressure on the breast and central chest wall. **Do not wear a bra after surgery.** Check with your surgeon about when you can begin to wear a non-underwire bra.

Wound Care

- **You may shower 48 hours after your surgery.** You can get the incision and drain sites wet in the shower by allowing soapy water to run over them. Pat dry both areas.
- You do not need to cover your incisions after showering unless your surgeon specifically tells you to.
- Do not soak the incision under water (baths/ swimming/hot tubs).
- Do not apply a heating pad to any surgical site. You may have decreased sensation and could easily get a burn without realizing it.
- Wear loose fitting clothing. Do not wear underwear or pants that sit at or above the belly incision.

Drain Care

- Every 12 hours (twice a day), empty the drainage and write down how much fluid was in the drain. If the drain output is high, you may need to empty the drains 3 times a day. Record output in milliliters (ml).
- Keep a separate record for each drain (for each 24 hour period).
- You may shower with the drains in place. To prevent pulling, attach the drain to a belt or lanyard while you are showering.
- If the drain comes out accidentally, put a piece of dry gauze over the drain site and call your surgeon. Do **not** attempt to push the drain back into your skin.

Restrictions

- **Driving:** You can return to driving if you are no longer taking opioid pain medication, and you feel comfortable steering the vehicle. You may drive with drains in place. The seat belt should not cause undue compression on the reconstructed breast.
- **Walking:** We encourage it. However, to avoid tension in your abdomen, **you need to bend your hips and knees when you are walking.** This will put you in a semi-flexed position. Use this walking posture for 6-12 weeks.
- Do not bend, push, pull, strain, or lift anything that weighs more than 5 pounds until your surgeon gives permission.
- Instead of using your belly muscles to get out of bed (such as doing a sit-up), roll over on your side.
- Do not sleep on your stomach (abdomen) for 6-12 weeks. You may sleep on your side as long as there is no pressure on the reconstructed breast.

Smoking

- Avoid all nicotine including secondary smoke, smokeless tobacco, nicotine patches, and nicotine vapors for 6 weeks.

Pain Control

- Ibuprofen (Advil®/Motrin®) and acetaminophen (Tylenol®) are over-the-counter pain medicines that work very well for pain control. Please take as directed on the bottle.
- **The maximum daily dose of acetaminophen is 4000 milligrams.** Check all medication labels. Acetaminophen may be an ingredient in over-the-counter and prescription medications.
- You can take 600 mg of ibuprofen (Advil®/Motrin®) every 6 hours or 800 mg every 8 hours. Please take it with food and a tall glass of water.
- You may alternate the ibuprofen and acetaminophen every 3 to 4 hours if needed.

Call Us Immediately If...

- you have signs of infection: redness that spreads beyond the incision, increased pain or tenderness, foul smelling odor, drainage with pus, swelling, and/or fever above 101°F (38.3°C). Note that a low-grade temperature (less than 101°F) is normal after surgery
- you have signs of excessive bleeding at the site of your surgery (such as slow oozing that soaks the dressing or a sudden increase in the size of the reconstructed breast or the abdomen)
- you have signs of problems with blood flow to the flap: look at the color of the breast skin island - the areas on the reconstructed breasts that the plastic surgery team checked in the hospital. An increasingly purple color or a change to pale white may signal a problem with blood flow to the flap

During office hours, Monday - Friday, 8 am - 5 pm, call **716-845-8186**.

Evenings, weekends, and holidays, call **716-845-2300** and the staff will assist you.

If you experience difficulty breathing and/or have shortness of breath, seek immediate medical attention at the nearest hospital emergency department.