

Breast Reduction

Instructions for Before and After Surgery



Dartmouth-Hitchcock
MEDICAL CENTER

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Preparing for Surgery

- Please read the ASPS booklet or office brochure before your surgery. If you did not receive one in the mail, ask the nurse for a booklet during your consultation appointment.
- We recommend going to the following website: breasthealthonline.com. This website was created by women who have had breast reduction surgery. We will include some of their suggestions in this brochure.
- Women over 40: Since you should not have a mammogram for six months after surgery, you should schedule one within six months before surgery.
- Stop tobacco use and avoid being around anyone who smokes for at least one month before and two weeks after surgery. Smoking can impair wound healing and lead to infection. Due to a strong risk for delayed healing, we will perform a urine test on the day of your surgery to test for byproducts of smoking. If the test is positive, your surgery will be cancelled.
- If you are using nicotine patches or gum, you should stop two weeks before surgery and for five days after surgery.
- Stop taking aspirin and ibuprofen products 14 days before your surgery and for at least two days after your surgery, unless otherwise directed. These products thin your blood and may increase bleeding.

Other blood thinning products to avoid are:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| - Vitamin E | - Fish oil |
| - Garlic supplements | - Ginkgo Biloba |
| - Ginseng | - St. John's Wort |

- Continue to take your prescribed medications unless otherwise advised by your doctor. If you have questions about your medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- To be safe, please take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) only for pain relief in the two weeks before your surgery.
- Arrange for a support person to help you after surgery with the following:
 - ⇒ To fill your prescriptions
 - ⇒ Receive instructions for your care
 - ⇒ Drive you home and stay with you for at least the first 24 hours after surgery
 - ⇒ Bring you back to the clinic within three days for your first post-op visit
- Your doctor will determine if you need an appointment with Pre-Admission Testing prior to surgery. If you do, an appointment will be made for you.
- The Same Day Surgery team will call you in the afternoon the business day before your surgery to let you know the time of your surgery. You will be instructed not to eat anything after midnight. Clear fluids are allowed after midnight until three hours before your surgery.
- Shower the night before and the morning of surgery with an antibacterial soap (Hibiclens®, Dial®, or Lever 2000®). Take special care to wash your chest and underarms. Do not apply deodorant, powder or lotion.
- Do not wear any jewelry or nail polish. Sculptured nails may have to be clipped for monitoring purposes.
- The Same Day Surgery nurses will give you a surgical bra

to wear home after surgery. You will receive a second bra at your two week follow-up visit with your doctor. If you want a third bra, you can buy a similar looking sports bra at a department store or online.

- Wear your bra 24 hours a day for six weeks after surgery. You may remove the bra to shower or for washing. After six weeks, you may wear any bra you want, as long as it has no underwire. Do not buy underwire bras for three months from the day of surgery. The skin under your breast can still be a little numb during this time and the underwire can cause a sore.

Helpful preparation hints:

- ✓ Make sure items like milk, juice and water are in small containers. Gallon and half gallon containers will be too heavy for you to lift.
- ✓ Have pre-made dinners on hand so you can cook them in the microwave.
- ✓ Prepare foods high in protein such as meat, poultry, fish and eggs. Eating more protein will help you heal at a faster rate, as will adding dark green vegetables.
- ✓ Have crackers or pretzels on hand to eat with your medication or if you have an upset stomach.
- ✓ Use paper plates and plastic cups so you do not need to wash dishes.
- ✓ Bring items down from high shelves so you do not have to reach. Bring up items on low shelves so you do not need to bend down.
- ✓ Plan to wear button-down shirts, loose pants, and slip-on shoes, as it will be difficult to raise your arms or bend at the waist.

- ✓ Have your night clothes, slippers, dressing supplies and medications set up and ready for when you come home. Have a phone in easy reach, as well as remote controls, and reading material.
- ✓ Try to have someone available to run to the store for you. Driving can be hazardous the first week or two and while you are taking narcotics. Your range of motion may be limited and you may not be able to react quickly enough in response to a dog running into the road or a car cutting you off.

Items to have on hand:

Some supplies which may be helpful during your recovery are:

- ⇒ Flexible neck straw
- ⇒ A gentle laxative
- ⇒ Thermometer
- ⇒ Slip on shoes
- ⇒ Several house robes
- ⇒ A pillow to use under your seat belt
- ⇒ High protein foods
- ⇒ Antibacterial soap
- ⇒ Aquaphor® ointment
- ⇒ Extra gauze or nursing pads
- ⇒ Paper tape
- ⇒ A list of phone numbers / emergency contacts for your helpers

Day of Surgery

- Your support person can wait in the surgery waiting room. He or she should plan on waiting about three to five hours.
- Your surgery normally takes two hours.
- Occasionally, patients need to spend the night at the hospital due to nausea or pain. However, the majority of patients go home in three to five hours following surgery.

Following Surgery

The healing process after breast reduction surgery varies with each person. You should expect to feel tired for the first two to three weeks due to anesthesia and the healing process. Rest often during the day and get a good night's sleep.

- With any surgery there is some discomfort or pain. We will prescribe pain medication, usually a narcotic and an anti-inflammatory. Take both as prescribed and only as needed. Most people take their narcotic for the first couple of days and their anti-inflammatory for one to two weeks. Please read your "Narcotic Use and Post Op Pain" handout for proper use of your pain medications.
- Shooting pain and burning sensations are normal and will subside as you heal.
- Breast swelling is normal, as is mild bruising.
- Expect to have some pink, red or clear drainage from your incisions for the first one to two weeks. Continue to use gauze dressings until the drainage is gone.

- Expect redness at your incision line for several weeks as your stitches absorb. If the redness spreads away from the incision, please call the clinic.
- Spitting sutures: Occasionally an area of redness and tenderness develops where a dissolving stitch becomes irritated and pushes to the surface. This stitch is clear or white and looks like fishing line. If this occurs, it is not an emergency. You may clip the stitch or call the clinic for an appointment with the nurse.
- Your breasts will take about six months to acquire their new shape.
- Your incisions will get red and bumpy in the first three months as your body builds scar tissue. This is the best time to massage your scars (see the scar massage handout). By your six month appointment the scars will have lightened and flattened. However, it takes at least a year for your scars to heal.

Getting a good night's sleep

Your surgeon may ask you to sleep on your back for two weeks. Here are some suggestions for a good night's sleep.

- Try sleeping in your recliner chair.
- Have extra pillows in your bed for support: two along your sides and one under your knees to keep you on your back and to relieve lower back pressure. Buy a large "body pillow" or a pillow with arm rests for sitting up in bed.

Getting out of bed

You will be asked to limit the use of your arms for two weeks

after surgery. This can be a problem when trying to get out of bed. The following suggestions help you get out of bed with minimal use of your arms.

- When in bed, pull your knees up towards your chest and tip to the side, gently rolling out of bed. Take care not to roll onto your breasts.
- Create a nest of pillows. Having many pillows to prop you in a semi-upright position helps give you that extra boost to get out of bed.
- Have someone put gentle pressure to your lower shoulder blades as you sit up. This gives you the extra power you need to get to your feet.

Showering and bathing

- If you have breast drains, the nurses usually removes them within the first three days following surgery. You may shower two days following surgery whether you have drains or not. Do wash by gently touching your breasts.
- Do not shower if you have had a free nipple graft. Your dressing must stay dry and in place until you see your doctor, usually in seven to nine days.
 - ◆ Be sure to have someone nearby when taking your first shower in case you feel dizzy. Remember your center of gravity will be different and you will be taking a narcotic.
- If you have taping under your breast, leave that in place until your appointment with the doctor in two weeks. Pat the tape dry after each shower. You will continue to tape for six weeks following surgery.

Do's and don'ts for the next six weeks:

- ◆ Do not drive a motor vehicle for one to two weeks until you can handle the steering wheel without discomfort. Do not drive while taking your narcotic. You will be able to wear a seat belt if you place a small pillow over your chest area.
- ◆ Do not engage in sexual activity for at least one week.
- ◆ Do not smoke or be around anyone who smokes for two weeks. Smoking delays healing and can lead to infection.
- ◆ Do not lift more than five pounds or bend at the waist to lift for six weeks.
- ◆ Do not participate in strenuous activities such as running or aerobics for six weeks.
- ◆ Do not tan at the incision lines for at least six months.
- ✓ Do resume walking at a gentle pace.
- ✓ You may return to work in one to six weeks (average time is three weeks) depending upon your work activity.
- ✓ Do report signs of infection.

Signs of infection:

- A temperature over 100.4° F or 38° C.
- Redness at the incision line that is beginning to spread away from the incision after the first 48 hours.
- Yellow pus-like or foul smelling drainage larger than dime size from the incision or drain sites.
- Increased pain/discomfort that is not relieved by your pain medicine.

Please call the clinic if pain and swelling in one breast is much greater than the other.

Contact information:

Contact your doctor during office hours:

Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Call (603) 650-5148

On weekends or after hours:

Call (603) 650-5000 and ask the operator to page the Plastic Surgery Resident on call.

Prescription Line: To order refills of your prescriptions, call **(603) 653-3905** from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Narcotic renewals will not be honored after hours or on weekends. Make your request a few days before you run out, as it may take up to 24 hours for physician approval.

**For a listing of providers, events, support groups
and health information visit Dartmouth-Hitchcock.org
Manage your health online at myD-H.org**

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center is a charitable organization and has a financial assistance policy.

DHMC is a Smoke-Free and Tobacco-Free campus.



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