

# DIEP FLAP BREAST RECONSTRUCTION



## Post-Surgical Guide

### INCISIONS

- Your incisions are closed in multiple layers with absorbable sutures.
- The surface will be sealed with a medical glue and/or glue tape.
- Your abdominal closure may feel tight. Keep your body flexed when in bed by placing two pillows behind your back and a pillow under your knees or relaxing in a recliner. When walking, you may need to bend at the knees and tip forward at the hips to relieve tension for the first week or two.
- ABSOLUTELY NO ICE or HEATING PADS to surgical sites.

### DRAINS

- Use proper hand hygiene such as a gel sanitizer on hands before caring for drain.
- Twice a day, have your caregiver strip the drain tubing (gently milk the tubing towards the bulb) and record the output using clear measuring cups. Be sure to record each drain separately. Discard drainage in toilet.
- Call the office for an increase in bright bloody drainage, cloudy drainage, increase in pain, loss of suction (bulb won't stay compressed), leaking around drain exit site, or a clogged bulb.
- If there is an accidental dislodgement of drain, apply a gauze dressing and call the office.
- Secure drains with safety pins, drain pouches or velcro belt if provided by hospital.
- Drains typically stay in until they are outputting about 20 ml or less per 24 hours.

### ACTIVITY

- Expect a 6-8 week recovery after surgery.
- Arms must stay by your side for the first 2 weeks. No reaching. You will need someone to help with activities such as washing your hair.
- "Robe and slippers" recovery for the first 2 weeks. Relax, rest and do light activity only. Be sure to take short walks throughout the house frequently during the day.
- After 2 weeks, you may elevate arms to shower, but not above shoulders.
- No twisting, no lifting greater than 5-10 lbs for 6 weeks.
- No pressure on breasts.
- You must sleep on your back for 4 weeks.
- No underwire bras for 6 weeks.
- May drive after 2 weeks if off all prescription pain medication.
- You may be able to return to work at 4 weeks, but only if it is on "light duty."

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### SHOWER

- You will shower on the day of discharge prior to leaving the hospital.
- Once home, you can wait a few days before showering again. When you do, use your hand or a very soft, clean washcloth to wash your incisions. Do not rub the area. Pat dry.
- No soaking in a bath or swimming until cleared by the office. This is typically 4 weeks after surgery or once all the scabbing is gone from your incisions.

### MEDICATIONS

- Unless instructed otherwise, take two Aleve in the morning and two in the evening after discharge.
- For additional pain control, take prescribed narcotic pain tablets every 4-6 hours as needed for moderate to severe pain. You may also take extra-strength Tylenol for mild pain, but be sure not to take the narcotic pain medicine also, as those contain Tylenol.
- Prevent constipation while taking narcotic pain medication by taking one dose of Miralax and two doses of Colace daily until you are having normal bowel movements.

### EMERGENCIES

- **\*\*After hours, call Medlink Paging Service at (512) 323-5465\*\***
- Call the office immediately for:
  - Temperature greater than 101 degrees
  - Significant increase in swelling or one breast more swollen than the other
  - Extreme pain not controlled by pain medication
  - Redness around incisions or pus/yellow/green drainage
  - Darkened or blackened skin (in excess of normal bruising)