



BOICE-WILLIS CLINIC
**PLASTIC
SURGERY**

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INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR TISSUE EXPANDER BREAST RECONSTRUCTION

Please follow some basic guidelines in order to maximize results and to minimize any risks or complications in your post-operative recovery.

Before your surgery:

- **Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke.** Cigarette smoking impairs wound healing, blood flow, and respiratory secretions. Do **not** use nicotine patch or gum at this time.
- **Avoid alcohol.** Alcohol can be a blood thinner, so we recommend no drinking for two weeks prior to surgery and for two weeks following surgery.
- **Avoid aspirin, aspirin-containing products, and anti-inflammatory products.** All of these products may increase bleeding during surgery. Since many over-the-counter medications contain aspirin, please read labels carefully and refer to the comprehensive list of medications to avoid. *If aspirin is being prescribed for a heart condition or other medical conditions, please notify us for further instructions.*
- **Scrub body with antibacterial cleanser prior to surgery.**
- **Have a support system in place.** Make arrangements for a responsible adult to take you to and from the hospital, and to stay with you after your hospital stay for the first 24 hours.
- **Do not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the day prior to surgery.** This includes water, chewing gum, and mints. On the morning of surgery, you can brush your teeth but do not swallow any of the water. Prescription medication may be taken with a small sip of water on the morning of surgery.
- **Drink extra water the day before surgery** (but stop drinking by midnight!) A well-hydrated body is less likely to experience nausea after anesthesia.
- **Get prescriptions filled prior to surgery.** You will be given antibiotics and pain medications at your pre-operative visit, get them filled in advance of your surgery.
- **Follow guidelines outlined in Dr. Szymanski's peri-operative protocol.** These will all help to decrease the amount of swelling and bruising from your surgery.
- **Get proper rest the day before surgery.**

The day of surgery:

- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing.
- Do not wear any jewelry or make-up.
- Please arrive to the hospital at the appropriate scheduled time.

During your hospital stay:

You are now on the road to recovery. It is very important that you pay close attention to following the instructions listed below. These will help to assure improved wound healing and decrease the risk of post-operative complications. Following the instructions will help make your recovery easier.

- **Medication has been prescribed for you for pain.** Report any discomfort to the nursing staff. Pain medication works best when taken regularly - before pain becomes severe. Don't wait for pain to become a problem. The longer pain goes untreated, the harder it is to relieve. You will also need to notify the nursing staff if you are experiencing any nausea.
- **Special inflatable stockings are prescribed to improve circulation.** These should be worn when you are in bed. They will need to be removed by the nursing staff before you get out of bed to walk.
- **Movement is an important part of restoring proper circulation and breathing.** Walking "wakes-up" all your body systems, it improves circulation, encourages breathing and helps move gas along the digestive tract.
- **You will have an intravenous line for the first day post-operatively.** This provides fluids to keep you hydrated as well as access to give you antibiotics and other medications if needed.
- **It is important to use the bathroom facilities, not a bedpan to urinate.** Take advantage of trips to the bathroom for short walks around the hospital for improved circulation
- **Deep breathing and coughing is extremely important following surgery.** Deep breathing expands the lungs, aids circulation, and helps prevent pneumonia. The first time you cough will be the hardest. Try holding a pillow over the abdominal incision for support.

Once you are home:

- **Take your antibiotics and pain medication as prescribed.** Try to have some food in your stomach when taking medications to avoid nausea. If you experience any itching, rashes, or respiratory difficulties, please notify the office, as you may be allergic to one of the medications. Valium acts to reduce muscle spasm, and it can be very helpful in reducing discomfort when taken in addition to pain medication. Start to wean off the pain medications once symptoms improve. For minor discomfort you may take Tylenol®, if not allergic.
- **You may feel the fill port of the drain.** Do not be concerned if you feel a lump underneath your arm or on your chest, as the fill port can often be felt through the skin.
- **You may shower 48 hours after your surgery.** Let the water hit your back and not forcefully onto your incisions, and try to avoid saturating the wounds. Gently pat them dry and re-apply

your garment. Use a cloth belt to attach the drains when you shower. Avoid soaking in baths or whirlpools, as this will increase swelling in the body.

- **Follow proper drain care.** You will have a surgical drain in your armpit (one on each side for bilateral mastectomy). These will stay in place for approximately 5 to 7 days. It may be necessary for you to go home with it in place, and if so, your drains are likely to be removed on your first postoperative visit. Please empty and record drainage amounts on the drain worksheet provided. You or your caregiver will be instructed in their care prior to discharge. Expect to have some oozing for the first day after they are removed.
- **All sutures are underneath the skin and are made of absorbable material.** Your incisions are covered by steri-strips (tape). These are to be left in place and will be removed or changed by the MD or physician assistant
- **Avoid heavy lifting, pushing, pulling, and straining or strenuous exercise for six weeks after surgery.** Casual walking is encouraged, but avoid any activity that causes any tension on your incisions in order to keep scars as fine as possible. In addition, avoid sexual intercourse for two weeks after surgery.
- **Continue taking frequent short walks, increasing the distance gradually.** Listen to your body to know what you can tolerate. Also continue doing breathing exercises. Your breast surgeon will instruct you on the appropriate arm exercises.
- **Expect some discoloration in the reconstructed breast.** This discoloration will decrease over the first few weeks.
- **Driving is usually permitted two weeks after surgery as long as you are not taking pain medication.** We do not want you making poor decisions behind the wheel if you are having any discomfort, and remember that you are “under the influence” when taking prescription pain medication. You will be informed of when you may drive at your follow-up visit.
- **Avoid sun exposure on incision sites for three months.** Scars will tend to redden more during the initial period, so they need to be protected from sun exposure with clothing and strong sunblock. Avoid tanning beds for the first three months as well.
- **Do not use any heating pads or ice compresses on your operative areas.**
- **Remember to eat healthy and include protein in your diet.** Protein is essential to the healing process, and it is best to avoid foods with lots of sodium as they will increase swelling. A daily multi-vitamin is recommended, and continue vitamin supplements if purchased.
- **Do not hesitate to call the office if you have any questions regarding your recovery.** Observe your skin and incision carefully. Look for any redness, warmth at incision site, excessive swelling, unusual drainage, opening of an incision or an increased temperature (over 100⁰). Call the office if any of these should occur.
- **Come to your scheduled follow-up visits.** Call the office to schedule a follow-up appointment, if this was not previously arranged. We closely follow patients after their surgery to ensure proper healing and to reinforce postoperative instructions to make this the best possible surgical experience.

