

Brachioplasty Postoperative Instructions

Immediately After Surgery:

- You may be in hospital overnight or discharged from Day Surgery after your surgery.
- You will be discharged from hospital with pain killers and a course of antibiotics.
- You will also be wearing your garment.

Pain Medication:

- Take 2x paracetamol tablets (Panamax or Panadol) every 6 hours regularly for the first 3-5 days.
- Take ibuprofen (nurofen or brufen) 400 mg with breakfast, lunch and dinner as required. Do not take ibuprofen on an empty stomach. Do not take ibuprofen if you have asthma, or known allergic reactions to non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as aspirin, naproxen, naprosyn or feldene.
- For severe pain, take oxycodone (endone) or pandeine forte tablets (as instructed on the packet) if required.
- If your pain is severe and not relieved by endone, please call the office or Dr Vrtik (if after hours).

Hygiene:

- Do not use a shower for the first 24 hours after surgery; sponging and towelling around your garment should be adequate. If your garment got wet, use a hairdryer on cool setting and dry your garment. DO NOT remove your garment.
- You can have a shower when you go home, but you must put your garment back on between showers for 6 weeks.
- Your first postoperative appointment will be at 5-8 days after your operation, at which time your suture lines will be checked.
- You will have a transparent (purple tinged) tape over your suture lines – this can be washed over and pat dry in the shower. It will be removed by our nurse three weeks after your procedure.

Sleeping:

You can sleep in whichever position that you are comfortable in, however, most patients find it uncomfortable to lie on their operative sites for at least 5 days. To ensure a good night sleep, make sure you take your pain medications prior to sleeping. It is not unusual to be particularly sleepy and tired after an operation or an anaesthetic. Rest is very important after any surgery, so take time to rest as needed.

Diet:

Recovering from anaesthesia is like recovering from the flu. Start with clear liquids; then advance to soft, non-spicy foods over the next 2 days. Nausea and vomiting is not uncommon after surgery, the most important thing to do is drink plenty of fluids to keep your body hydrated. This will pass once

the anaesthetic has been eliminated from your system. If you have any persistent nausea and vomiting over 48 hours after surgery, please contact the rooms.

Activity:

- You should rest quietly for the first 72 hours.
- Small, short walks around the ward or the house are encouraged to prevent clots in the legs.
- 'Potter' around for the first week, gradually increase your daily activity as the weeks go by.
- The post operative period can be an emotional time, feeling teary is normal and will pass.
- Avoid bending over, lifting (anything over 1 kg), pushing, pulling or straining for at least 6 weeks (this includes house work, lifting children, groceries etc).
- You can move your arms, legs, neck and torso in all directions – the wounds won't tear as long as the movements are within your comfortable range.
- No driving for one week. You should be able to drive when you can turn and look over your shoulder comfortably - so that you can change lanes safely
- Gentle walking is good exercise after the fourth week. You may be able to start exercising at 25% of your normal level after 6 weeks, graduate your level progressively over the following 4 weeks. It is not unusual to notice intermittent swelling in the arms in response to higher level of strains and activities.
- Most patients with desk jobs can return to work after 5-7 days, but those with more manual jobs (especially repetitive arm movements) need a minimum of 3-4 weeks off work.

Temperature:

A low-grade fever up to 37.5 degrees Celsius for 1-2 days is normal. Call the office if:

- Your temperature is 38 degrees Celsius or over.
- You feel feverish, chills, or unwell

Swelling:

Swelling reaches its peak at 48-72 hours after surgery. Some patients have swelling and bruising that follows gravity and tracks downwards into the forearm and hands. Bruising can be a range of colours from dark purple, green to yellow. Give your body at least 2 weeks for the bruises to start fading and 3 months for the swelling to disappear. The shape, size and appearance of your upper arms can take up to 3-6 months to settle.

Clothing & Garment:

- You need to wear your supportive garment for 6 weeks in total. It is ok to be without your garment for a few hours if you need to wash and dry it.
- Delay clothes shopping for at least 3 months – as your body shape and size will continue to change until the swelling has settled.

Follow-up:

- Your first follow-up is usually 5-8 days after surgery for wound check. Make sure you call the office to establish date and time if you have not already received your first post-operative appointment on discharge from the hospital.

- Dr Vrtik will see you at 8-10 weeks to check your progress and your results. Further appointments after this will be made if necessary.
- You are encouraged to contact rooms at any stage if you have any concerns prior to your next appointment.

Scar Management:

- Your surgical tape will be removed at 3 weeks. You will be advised by the nurse in regards to scar management. It is highly recommended that you purchase silicone tapes (please ask our nurses), and apply this to the wound for a minimum of 16 hours a day for at least 3 months. You also need to massage your scars when the tapes are removed. Massage firmly, use your fingers or thumb, press firmly and massage in a rotating motion on the scar. This is recommended for three months.
- If you notice any oozing or breakdown of your scars after 3-4 weeks, this could be a sign of fat necrosis or infection. Please contact the office for a review.
- Please do not hesitate to contact the rooms and make an appointment to see either Dr Vrtik or our experienced nurses if you have any concerns about your scars at any stage.

What to Expect after a Brachioplasty:

- The upper arms will be swollen in the first few weeks; these areas may appear to be very 'fat'. Allow at least 3 months for the shape to settle.
- Your skin will be irritated and sensitive after surgery. You should avoid the sun, and use a gentle cleanser and moisturiser.
- Some areas may be numb after surgery. It will be a few months before any sensory recovery begins as the nerves take time to link up. When the nerve recovers, you may experience tingling, buzz, or electric shock sensation periodically. This is expected, and will disappear after a few months. It is not unusual to have areas of permanent numbness around the scar after your procedure.
- The operative areas may feel firm and lumpy in places, especially if you have had some fat necrosis within the tissue. Gentle massage over these areas can begin 2 weeks after surgery. It takes time for the tissue to regain their normal suppleness and softness. Lumpy areas can take up to 6 months to soften; in some rare instances, they can take up to 2 years to disappear.
- Sometimes, the skin will appear irregular, puckered and pleated around the scar. All this will take time to smooth out as swelling and scarring relaxes. Again, massaging of the scar is important to help these settle.
- Some asymmetry is normal and should be expected from your surgery. Most people have minor asymmetry naturally, and preoperatively.
- Remember, surgery takes time to settle, and often at 4 weeks, you'll look very good, but you will not look your best yet! Often patients look better at 3 months than at 1 month after their procedure.
- It is important that you contact the rooms (and not your GP!) at any stage if you have questions or concerns. We need to be fully aware of any problems you may be having, and our nurses are experienced in postoperative care; they are more than happy to help with

any queries or concerns you may have, and will be able to organise an appropriate urgent appointment for you if required.

Please Contact Us if:

- You develop a fever or become unwell.
- Your nausea and vomiting persists after 48 hours.
- You develop spreading redness/rash over the operative area or suture lines.
- You feel fluid build up or sudden swelling in the area.
- You have pain which is not relieved or controlled by your pain-killers.
- You have sudden copious discharge of fluid or oozing from your wounds.

Contact Telephone Numbers:

During Office Hours and Non-Urgent Matters – 3353 6165

After hours and for Emergencies only – 0421739149

