

# Postoperative Instructions

## Removal & Replacement of Implants

### Immediately After Surgery:

- You will be in hospital from 1-3 nights.
- Often, you will have a drain coming from each breast which removes any old blood or extra fluid from the operative sites. These drains will be reviewed by Dr Vrtik daily prior to removal.
- Prior to discharge, your drains should be removed, and your discomfort should also be manageable by oral tablets alone without injections.
- You will be discharged from hospital with pain killers and a course of antibiotics.

### 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, history of stomach ulcers, bad reflux, 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:

If you have been sent home with your dressings intact with foam tape:

- Do not use a shower on your torso; sponging and towelling around your dressings should be adequate. Showering the lower half of your body is okay. DO NOT get your dressings wet.
- If you would like to wash your hair, do it with your head tipped back at the basin with help (going to the hairdresser is a very good option).
- If the corners of the tapes are starting to lift – trim it back so the corners sit flat on your skin.
- If your dressings are falling off, or becoming excessively itchy – contact the office for an earlier appointment with our nurses.
- Your first postoperative appointment will be 5-7 days, at which time your dressings will be removed. BRING YOUR BRA with you to this appointment, so that our nurses can fit you into the bra.

After your dressings have been removed at 3-7 days: OR

If you have been sent home without your dressings, but in the postoperative bra:

- Shower daily over your surgical tapes and pat dry
- Use a hairdryer on a cool setting to dry stubborn areas such as areas under your arms or under your breasts.
- Wear your soft bras at all times between showers.

**Sleeping:**

You can sleep in whichever position that you are comfortable in, however, most patients are unable to lie on their sides for at least 2-3 weeks, whilst it can take up to 3 months before some can lie on their stomach. 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 breast 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.

**Activity:**

- You should rest quietly for the first 24 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, neck and torso in all directions – it won't tear anything out as long as the movements are within your comfortable range.
- Be gentle with lifting your arms above your head within the first two weeks; often, quick movements of the arm can result in sharp, stabbing or pulling pain. Heavy lifting and repetitive activities with your arms above the head are NOT recommended for the first 6 weeks. If your breasts swell after any activity, it is usually an indication you've done too much.
- No driving for two weeks. After two weeks, 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 second 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. Make sure you wear a supportive bra (with no wires) during your exercises for the first 3 months.
- Most patients with desk jobs can return to work after 2-3 weeks, but those with more manual jobs (especially repetitive arm movements) need a minimum of 4-6 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 tracks all the way down into the upper abdomen and under the armpits. 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 completely resolve. The shape, size and appearance of your breast can take up to 3-6 months to settle.

#### **Clothing & Bras:**

- You need to wear a supportive bra for 3 months. This does not necessary have to be the bra we provided – as long as there is no wire and the bra is soft and non-irritating to the scars.
- DO NOT wear an underwire bra for at least 3 months (the wires will change the shape of your breast and also irritate the scar, thus encouraging prominent scar formation).
- Delay bra and clothes shopping for at least 3 months – as your body shape and size will continue to change until the swelling in your breast has settled.

#### **Follow-up:**

- Your first follow-up is usually 5-7 days after surgery for wound check and dressing change. 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 and check your progress and scars. Further advice in regards to breast care, breast screening and scar management will be discussed with you during this consultation.
- 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.
- You will be sent a reminder every year for annual implant checks. It is important that your implants are checked every 1-2 years for its integrity as well as hardening. If you are having mammograms, it is best to time your appointments after your routine mammograms. Please bring your results and films with you.

#### **Wound and Scar Management:**

- Once your surgical tape has been removed at 1 weeks, the nurses will apply fixomil tape to all your scars. The tapes can be showered and pat dry (or with the assistance of a hair dryer). The tape need to be changed weekly for 5 weeks.
- If you notice any oozing or breakdown of your scars while changing your tape, please contact the rooms. These could be signs associated with healing problems in the wound under the breast, or fat necrosis – although not detrimental, will need to be managed appropriately to minimise infection and scarring.
- You can start massaging along the scar (over the fixomil tape) at 3 weeks. Use your fingers or thumb, press firmly and massage in a rotating motion along the scar. It should only take approximately 5 minutes, using both hands on both breasts. Regular massage at least 5-6 times a day is recommended for 3 months.
- You should also start massaging your implants at 3 weeks. Using the palms of your hand, firmly sweep and push your breast inwards twice, downwards twice and upwards once. Then use your palm and firmly massage each quadrant of your breast, using firm rotator

movements so soften the scars around the implants. Repeat this cycle for five minutes and for five times each day. This need to be continued for 3 months.

- Implant massage should be continued for your lifetime, at least twice a day after 3 months.
- If you find that your scar is still quite lumpy and red at 8 weeks (when the fixomil tape has finished), it may be worth investing in roll of silicone tape. After shower each day, apply the tape over your scar and wear for at least 16-24 hours a day. The tape can be reused until it loses its adhesiveness (usually a week). Continue with massage of the scar each day in the shower. This is effective on modifying scars if used for at least 2 months and up to 6 months after surgery.
- 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 your surgery:**

- While your breasts are swollen in the first few weeks, they may appear high on your chest wall. Allow at least 3 months for the shape and size to settle.
- The skin around the operative site can be irritated and sensitive after surgery. You should avoid the sun, and use a gentle cleanser and moisturiser.
- Often your breast and nipples will be numb after surgery. Sensation may or may not return fully, but 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, buzzing, or electric shock-like sensations periodically in the breast. This is expected, and will disappear after a few months.
- The breast may feel firm and lumpy in places, especially if you have had some fat necrosis within the breast tissue. Gentle massage over the breast tissue and these lumpy areas can begin 4 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.
- Any pre-existing lumpiness in your breast may persist after surgery as it may not be possible to remove all silicone-associated scarring from your breast.
- Please note that if any of the lumpiness in the breast gets worse, bigger or becomes worrisome, it is important you contact the office to see Dr Vrtik; you may need an ultrasound or mammogram to exclude more sinister causes.
- Sometimes, the skin will appear irregular, puckered and pleated around the suture lines. All this will take time to smooth out as the scar relaxes and the deep sutures dissolve. Again, massaging of the scar is important to help these settle.
- Some asymmetry of the breast and nipple 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 6 months than at 1 month after surgery.
- 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 in your breasts 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

