

Top Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

- For most patients, top surgery is same day surgery, so you go home the same day.
- Have someone around to help you at home for 1-2 days.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Follow a balanced diet and be sure to stay hydrated with lots of fluid. The more hydrated you are the more blood flow goes to the areas that are healing.
- You will be given prescriptions for a short course of an antibiotic. If you had free nipple grafts, it is very important to take your antibiotic as instructed until your first postoperative visit to prevent graft infection. The first dose of antibiotic should be taken the same night of surgery and then twice a day for the whole week or until your nipple bolsters are removed. Try taking it with a few crackers in your stomach. If you had no nipple grafts, the course will only be a few days.
- You will also be given a prescription for a narcotic pain medication. Decreased activity and pain medication can cause constipation, so you may want to add more raw fruit to your diet and be sure to increase fluid intake. Take over-the-counter Colace and Senna to improve bowel function as needed.
- Take pain medication and antibiotic WITH food.
- Take the narcotic pain medication as needed. If one tablet is too strong, you can break it in half, or you can take two tablets if one is not strong enough. It is ok to take Tylenol for pain WITH the narcotic OR instead of the narcotic. Narcotics can make you constipated and can lead to addiction so do not take them unless you need them. The maximum dose of Tylenol is 3-4 grams per day, so you can take two of the 500 mg pills up to three to four times a day. Taking Tylenol with the narcotic has a synergistic effect.
- Do not drink alcohol or drive until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication.
- Do NOT smoke and stay away from all nicotine products in any form, including second-hand smoke, as nicotine delays healing and increases the risk of healing complications. This is most critical 4 weeks before surgery and 4 weeks after surgery.
- Take over-the-counter probiotics (Lactobacillus) and eat probiotic-active yogurt while you are on antibiotics.

Activity

- Start walking around your house as soon as possible (at least ONCE the same night that you had surgery and a few times a day thereafter), as this helps to reduce the risk of blood clots, pneumonia and constipation. When you find yourself lying in bed, squeeze your leg muscles and bend your ankles and knees frequently to improve blood flow in your legs – this will also help reduce risk of blood clots.
- However, there is a fine balance between leisurely walking (which is very important) and too much activity (which can cause problems like fluid collections). NO power walking or walking long distances, NO lifting anything over 5 lbs, NO walking up big hills or long flights of stairs, NO house cleaning, and NO strenuous activity of any kind. Avoid anything that would cause you to feel out of breath or come close to breaking a sweat for 3-4 weeks after surgery. The more you do, the more your blood pressure goes up and the more your body produces fluid and causes you to swell! Swelling increases risk for fluid collections and can keep the drains in longer. It is MOST critical to limit your activity level at weeks 1-2 after the drains come out. After 4 weeks you may start light exercise (stationary bike) and gradually work up from there.

- If you had double incision surgery, avoid raising your elbow above the level of your shoulder for as long as you can up to 6 months after surgery. This is to prevent the inferior scars from stretching or widening. Before surgery, it is a good idea to keep things on lower shelves that you may need to reach. Scar strengthening is progressive, so the closer you get to 6 months the less important this becomes.
- Do not drive if you are still taking pain medication, and do not drive until you have regained full range of motion in your arms and feel confident that you could respond quickly in the case of an emergency. Usually around 1 week it is ok to start driving if you meet these other criteria.
- Return to work depends on the activity level involved in your job. Stay away from any job or sport that risks a blow to your chest for at least 4 weeks.

Dressings and Incision Care

- **THINGS THAT ARE GOOD TO BUY AHEAD OF TIME:**
 - Bacitracin ointment (will need right away) and Lotion (ex. Cerave/Cetaphil – will need @3 weeks)
 - Band-aids
 - Dry gauze
 - ABD pads (can usually be found at the pharmacy, not required, and can use more dry gauze as an alternative)
 - Everything else will be provided to you (oily gauze for the nipples if needed, ACE bandages for compression)
 - Other optional items that are recommended: Tylenol, Throat Lozenges, Tums
- You will have steri strips (tapes that are tan or white colored) over your incisions that will stay on for 1 week. You may have a compression wrap (ace wrap) over your dressings which will stay on for 3 weeks total.
- You should keep your chest dressings clean and dry until your first postoperative visit, and shower ONLY below the waist, with a sponge bath elsewhere. The grafts should not get wet until the dressing is removed for the first time. You will be able to shower normally at 10 days after surgery.
- When you start showering for the first time (@10 days if free nipple grafts and @1 week without) - Turn your back to the water and let the soap and water rinse over everything. Do not turn your chest directly into the stream of water and do not scrub the incisions. It is ok to lather up and get soapy water over the steri strips, but do not soak the incisions in a tub. Make sure you dry off gently and completely, then replace the ace wrap snugly across the chest wall. You will need someone to help you with this.
- You will have one drain on each side. The drains should be stripped (search YouTube for "JP drain stripping") and emptied at least twice daily for the first 2-3 days, then at least once daily thereafter. Record all drain output according to the time and day it was emptied and bring the recordings with you to your first office visit. Your drains will very likely be removed at your first postoperative visit. Keep the dressings over the drains intact and do not remove them when showering. While showering, you can hook the drains onto a necklace or lanyard so they don't hang down or get pulled on.
- The ace compression wrap should stay on for a full 3 weeks after surgery, at all times even when sleeping (with the exception of while you shower). It is even more important to keep the compression wrap on after the drains are removed, in order to prevent fluid buildup or swelling and to keep everything healing as flat as possible against the chest wall. Make sure the wrap is applied snug.

- **Care for free nipple grafts:**
 - After the dressings come off for the first time around one week after surgery, apply bacitracin (enough to cover the nipples completely) to the grafts ONCE OR TWICE daily to keep the areas moist followed by oil-emulsion gauze, dry gauze and/or ABD pad (any fluffy dry padding), followed by your compression wrap or garment. The amount of bacitracin you apply at first (weeks 2-3 after surgery) should be a large amount so that the ointment is covering the grafts completely, and adding the oil-emulsion gauze will help to hold in the moisture and will prevent the dressing over the grafts from sticking which can peel off some of the pigment when you perform dressing changes.
 - In the beginning (up to 3 weeks after surgery) the nipples need a lot of moisture for their healing process. This is NOT true at three weeks and later, when you should avoid over-moisturizing them. They will still need to be moisturized regularly after three weeks, but usually once a day (twice a day is ok if they look dry) with a tiny bit of moisturizer (enough to rub it into the nipples and to keep them looking soft). The best type of moisturizer to use is a simple lotion like Cerave or Cetaphil. It is important to give the nipples enough moisturizer at this point but only what they need. Over-moisturizing can increase risk of pimples and ingrown hairs.
 - Dressing changes for the nipples should be ONCE OR TWICE DAILY for about 1-2 days, followed by once daily until the 3 week point after surgery. Dr. Chandler will let you know if there should be any changes to this regimen and will let you know how to proceed after this initial time period.
 - If your drains were removed, you should apply a small amount of bacitracin over the drain sites and a bandaid once daily for a few days until the area looks like a healed scab or a red mark.
 - The skin grafts will be dry for a few months after which they will adapt and become similar to the rest of your skin. You should continue to moisturize the grafts with lotion as needed. As the grafts become more moist over time you can reduce the frequency of moisturizing the grafts depending on the amount of dryness.
- **Long-term scar care** (considerations around 4 weeks after surgery):
 - After 4 weeks you can start silicone therapy to prevent your scars from getting thicker.
 - Silicone gel sheets/tapes (over the counter) can help minimize scarring – apply them in the morning or at night starting at 3-4 weeks after surgery. Usually these should be worn 12 hours per day. You can start wearing them as soon as the incisions are healed completely with no open wounds, and tapes have been removed (3-4 weeks after surgery). ***Amazon has Elaiemei reusable scar tape at a very reasonable price***
 - Avoid exposing scars to sun for at least 12 months.
 - After you have healed, always use a strong sunblock, if sun exposure is unavoidable (SPF 50 or greater). Do NOT use sunblock if you still have scabs or small open wounds.
 - Scar massage can help keep scars flat and soft. Perform massage with ointment or cream on your finger twice daily.

What to Expect

- Minimal to moderate postoperative pain and soreness in the chest and arms is normal.
- Temporary bruising, swelling, soreness, or burning sensation is normal.
- Some oozing from the incisions is normal for 2 days or so.
- Temporary or permanent loss of nipple sensation.
- In 4-6 weeks you will be back to all your normal activities.

Appearance

- Discoloration will resolve in 2 weeks
- Most swelling will resolve over 6 weeks. However, swelling continues to go down gradually after that, even up to a year later.
- Scars may be red initially, and they will soften and fade with time.

When To Call

- If you have increased swelling or bruising.
- If swelling and redness persist after a few days.
- If you have increased redness along the incision.
- If you have severe or increased pain not relieved by medication.
- If you have any side effects to medications; such as, rash, nausea, headache, vomiting.
- If you have an oral temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- If you have any yellowish or greenish drainage from the incisions or notice a foul odor.
- If you have bleeding from the incisions that is difficult to control with light pressure.
- If you have loss of feeling or motion.

LIPOSUCTION:

- IF YOU HAD LIPOSUCTION, PLAN TO WEAR THE COMPRESSION GARMENT ON THE LIPOSUCTION SITE FOR 6 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY

For Medical Questions, Please CALL:

- (203) 423-3132, 24 hours a day
- Text-friendly number: (475) 328-2111 – *For routine, non-urgent questions, we ask that you attempt to contact this number prior to 8:00 pm. After 8:00 pm this phone number is NOT monitored. **If it is after 8:00 pm and you have an urgent or emergent issue, CALL 203-423-3132.**