

## **POSTOP INSTRUCTIONS**

### **TISSUE EXPANDER / IMPLANT EXCHANGE BREAST RECONSTRUCTION**

Fadi Constantine M.D  
214.739.5760

#### **GENERAL POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

- After surgery it is important to have someone available to stay with you for the first 24-48 hours after you are discharged from the hospital. You will be weak and may require help the first few times you get out of bed.
- Go to bed with your head and shoulders elevated on at least 2 firm pillows (about 30 degrees). While in bed during your recovery, lie on your back, keep your head elevated. Try not to sleep on your side.
- It is important to get out of bed (with assistance) as early and often as possible after your surgery to prevent postoperative problems. While the goal is to move about, even getting out of a chair will be beneficial. Please take frequent deep breaths to keep your lungs clear (15-20 per hour).
- **DO NOT SMOKE** or ingest any nicotine containing products (gum, e-cigarettes, etc.). This is very important for optimal wound healing.
- You may gradually resume normal daily activities after 48 hours being careful to avoid any activity that causes pain or discomfort. Strenuous activities and exercises are to be avoided until 3-4 weeks after surgery. During this recovery period your heart rate should stay below 100 beats per minute and grand sweeping movements of your arms should be avoided.
- You may shower starting the day after surgery. Dr. Constantine places a special dressing (Prineo tape) over your incision that is impermeable to water. You can get soap and water over the incisions without any problems. This dressing will stay on for 2-3 weeks. Dr. Constantine will remove it in the office during one of your post operative visits.
- Soaking of the incision sites in a bathtub, hot tub, swimming pool or other body of water should be avoided for 4 weeks to allow proper healing to occur.
- Driving may be resumed when a sharp turn of the steering wheel will not cause pain; this is usually within 7-10 days and when off all narcotics.
- All incisions will be extremely sensitive to sunlight during the healing phase. Direct sun contact or tanning booths are to be avoided. Use of clinical grade sunscreen with SPF 30 and zinc oxide (UVA and UVB protection) is recommended for at least 6 months

#### **SPECIFIC POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

- Please take the **pain medication** as directed for the first 5-7 days after surgery. It is not uncommon for you to need it every 4-6 hours. Take it with food. After this time, take the pain medication only if you have pain. If the prescription pain medication is too strong for your pain needs, over the counter

ibuprofen (400-800mg every 6-8 hours) can be substituted. In addition, you may be given an anti-anxiety/muscle relaxant medication that you may take as well to prevent aggravation of pain cycle.

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- Pain medicine containing narcotics can cause constipation. Occasionally this can be extremely uncomfortable and painful. To avoid this, over the counter Colace can help prevent constipation. Miralax and Magnesium Citrate can also be taken in more severe cases.
- While taking antibiotics it is important to take probiotics to avoid diarrhea and yeast infection. These can be bought over the counter in the form of pills or yogurt (Activa, etc.).
- For the first 48 hours keep your **arm movements** to a minimum. Your arms should not be used to support your body or lift anything heavy. Do not push with your arms to lift yourself in bed.
- You will likely have a **mesh tape dressing (Prineo)** over your incision, this will protect the incision for 2-3 weeks. Do not peel the dressing off as it may delay wound healing and cause excessive scarring. Dr. Constantine will remove this in 2-3 weeks after surgery.

You can **shower** starting 24 hours (1 day) after surgery. Use mild perfume/dye free soap and gently cleanse around the incision lines letting the soapy water run over the incisions. **Do not submerge the incisions under water.** Gently pat the incisions dry.

- You may wear the **surgical bra** or a **loose fitting sports-bra**. Dr. Constantine will advise you when you may wear an underwire bra (usually 6 weeks after surgery)
- Beginning at 3 weeks after surgery, apply a **scar cream** or **silicone sheeting** to the incisions to maximize wound healing. Use the cream for 6 months after surgery. The addition of a hydrating cream and vitamin cream will promote early softening and maturation of these areas.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY**

- Sensations like numbness, sharpness, and burning are common during the healing process. These sensations may last several weeks and will gradually disappear. In some cases, however, they can be permanent and a consequence of the mastectomy.
- Bruising and swelling are normal for 2-3 weeks. It will disappear over time.

## **IMPORTANT**

- **If you have nausea, vomiting, rash, shortness of breath, or diarrhea after taking your medications, please call our office.**
- **If you develop a fever (oral temperature greater than 100 degrees), redness and/or increased pain at surgical incision sites, please call Dr. Constantine.**
- **If you have major dental work or major surgery, please notify Dr. Constantine so he can prescribe a pre-operative medication to protect your implants from possible infection.**

**If you have any questions, please call Dr. Constantine at 214-739-5760.**