



Guidelines Following Breast Surgery

We hope that your stay in our Day Surgery Unit has been comfortable and to your satisfaction. We hope that you have a speedy recovery and that the following instructions will be of help.

Activity

- Following your operation you may feel tired. Listen to your body, pace yourself and rest as required. You can begin to resume your normal activities when you feel able.
- Gentle walking following an operation reduces the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (blood clots) in the leg, so it is important to keep moving regularly.
- You should feel ready to return to work in two to four weeks but this depends on your job and any further treatments you may require. You will need time to recover emotionally as well as physically.
- You will be seen by the surgeon in clinic usually 10-14 days after your operation to check on your recovery, discuss your results and treatment plan with you.

Wound care

- Showering – keep wound dry for 48 hrs then shower as usual drying area thoroughly afterwards. If a waterproof dressing has been used you may shower straight away.
- Steri-strips (paper tapes) will have been placed on the wound – these can gently be pulled away as they start to lift off the wound after five to seven days. Showering may help to loosen them.
- Dissolvable sutures (stitches) are common but sometimes staples or silk sutures are used. You will be told what type you have and whether they need to be removed.

Potential problems

- Bruising around the area will usually settle in a few weeks but may take longer.
- Sometimes excessive blood can collect under the skin and form a clot (haematoma). Occasionally a further operation is necessary to remove the clot and stop the bleeding.



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- If you notice any sign of infection, such as a hot red tender area, possibly with a discharge, and feel unwell, contact your General Practitioner (GP), who will prescribe antibiotics if necessary.
- Following surgery to your axilla (under arm area) the sensations in your arm may be different due to disturbance of the nerves in the area. You may commonly experience some of the following: pins and needles, burning or stinging, pain or pulling down the inside of the arm, numbness or hypersensitivity.
- You may notice a swelling in the breast or armpit. This is called a seroma and usually needs no treatment as they tend to resolve on their own. If the seroma causes pain it can be drained using a syringe and needle in clinic.

General advice

- Take regular pain killers for the first few days following your operation. Paracetamol and anti-inflammatory drugs can be very helpful.
- You can start wearing a bra when you feel comfortable to do so. A gently supportive sports bra or soft crop top may be more comfortable than a wired bra.
- You can start using deodorant when the wound in your armpit is healed or if you can use it without making contact with the wound.
- Massaging the scars and area around using unperfumed moisturisers helps to soften and break up scar tissue usually starting around two weeks after surgery.
- You can drive your car when you feel safe and competent. Check with your insurance company first to ensure that you are covered by your policy.
- Continue the arm exercises that the Physiotherapist/Breast Care Clinical Nurse Specialist has discussed with you. Reduce frequency when you have a normal range of movement.
- If you develop any late problems with arm movement or range of movements please contact your Breast Clinical Nurse Specialist who will arrange referral to the Physiotherapy service if appropriate.
- Avoid heavy lifting for a month and then increase gradually.

Lymphoedema prevention

Lymphoedema is fluid swelling that can occur in your arm following surgery to remove the lymph glands. Your risk of developing lymphoedema is low. The following precautions may reduce this risk further and relate to the operated side:

- Avoid needle pricks – blood tests, injection, and vaccinations.
- Avoid repeated blood pressure recording.
- Treat cuts/injuries promptly – clean thoroughly- antiseptic - dressing –
- See GP if any sign infection, antibiotics may be prescribed.
- Use the arm normally – keep mobile but avoid excessively heavy or repetitive strain.
- Keep skin well moisturized.
- Take care shaving underarm use lady shave or hair removing cream.
- Use gardening gloves when handling prickly plants/caustic substances.



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- Use sun protection –avoid sunburn.
- Try to avoid putting on excess weight.

If you have been given support stockings to wear it is important that you continue to wear them, day and night, until you are fully mobile (at least 24-48 hours). The stockings should be removed for a short time daily to wash the feet and legs. You may also hand wash the stockings but do not dry them by direct heat (radiator or tumble dryer).

You were given the following pain killers while in Day Surgery

Paracetamol at

Codeine at

Ibuprofen at

Instructions for patients who have had a general anaesthetic.

Anaesthetic drugs remain in the body for 24 hours and gradually wear off over this time.

During the 24 hours following your anaesthetic, you are under the influence of drugs and it is important to follow these instructions:

- Do not drive a car or any other vehicle, including a bicycle.
- Do not operate machinery or appliances such as cookers or kettles.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Do not lock the bathroom or toilet door or make yourself inaccessible to the person looking after you.
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a light diet, avoiding heavy or greasy foods.
- Take things easy for the day after your operation and do not work with machinery or take strenuous exercise.
- Do not make important decisions or sign important documents for 24 hours after your anaesthetic.

Some people take longer to recover from the effects of an anaesthetic so these guidelines may continue to be followed for up to 48 hours, if necessary.

If there are any problems after you return home, please telephone your GP or out of hours GP service, or the Day Surgery Unit on 01793 604148 between 8.00am and 7.00pm, Monday to Fridays (excluding bank holidays). After 7.00pm or at weekends please contact the Surgical Assessment Unit on 01793 604039.



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If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service, we would be happy to hear from you.

Please write to:

Senior Sister

Day Surgery Unit

Great Western Hospital

Marlborough Road

Swindon

SN3 6BB

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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